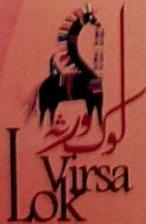


Khovar Folktales

Farid Ahmad Raza
and Zahoor ul Haq Danish

Volume 1



ناشران: تاجران کتب
عمومی شریعت اور دارالعلوم

email: alfaisalpublisher@yahoo.com

ISBN: 969-468-033-0

Price Rs: 650.00



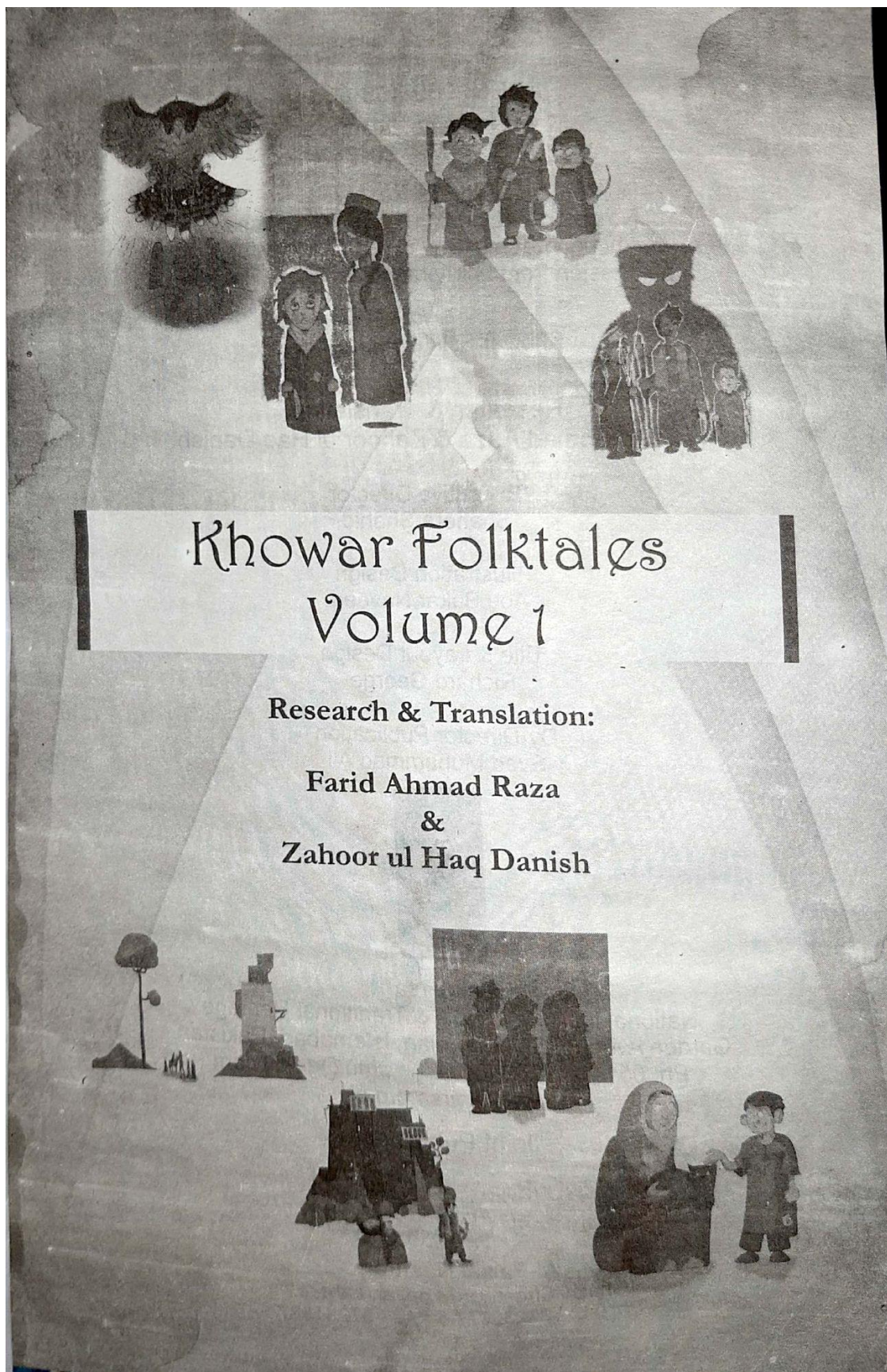
ڪهوار شيلوڻ

فر يدا محمد رضا، ظهور الحق دانش

جلد اول



الفیصل



Khowar Folktales Volume 1

Research & Translation:

Farid Ahmad Raza
&
Zahoor ul Haq Danish

ISBN: 969-468-033-0

© Lok Virsa, Islamabad.
May 2019

All Rights Reserved
No part of the book may be reproduced by
mimeograph or any other means without
permission from Lok Virsa, Islamabad, Pakistan.

Work
Khowar Folktales Volume 1

Research & Translation:
Farid Ahmad Raza & Zahoor ul Haq Danish

Executive Director
Shahera Shahid

Illustration Design
Abu Bakar Naveed

Title & Layout Design
Richard George

Dy-Director Publication
Syed Muhammad Ali



Lok Virsa
National Institute of Folk & Traditional Heritage
Garden Avenue, Shakarpurian, Islamabad, Pakistan.
Ph: 051-9249209 Email: jic.pmu@gmail.com
www.lokvirsa.org.pk

Joint Publisher

ناشران فیصل
عربی شریٹ اردو بازار لاہور

Al-Faisal Nashran
Ghazni Street, Urdu Bazar, Lahore.
Ph: 042 - 37230777 & 042 - 37231387

Authors' Preface

We are immensely pleased to know that the bilingual book of Khowar Folktales Volume-1 is in your hands. This booklet is a part of a larger project: a bilingual repository of Khowar folk stories, which will be published volume wise over the course of time.

Khowar folk literature is deeply rooted, in its form, in diverse traditions: royal, nomadic, fighting, hunting as well as agricultural tradition. However, a major series of Khowar folktales reflects the problems and adventures of the King's Son (*Bacho Zhaw*), who abandons the luxury of the castle either to find his dream-lady or fight the rival forces to keep the family's integrity. Khowar folk stories, like all folk literatures, 'embody the culture's belief system' and 'contain fundamental human truths by which people have lived for centuries.' It is famously said, "Knowing the characters and situations of folk literature is part of being culturally literate." However, with the advent of techno-culture of the 'Third Wave Civilization' we are growing culturally illiterate day by day, and in being so we tend to miss the traces of our social as well as moral and intellectual evolution as a people.

We hope this humble effort will lead to a conscious and critical approach to unearthing and understanding the essence of the Khow folk literature, which, we have been thinking, has endured merely because it is interesting or funny.

Doing translation in literature is a difficult and challenging task. Especially when it is folk literature, which is a repository of collective wisdom of the ages of yore, translating means describing one culture in terms of another. You run the risk of underrepresentation here, overrepresentation there, thus spoiling the very essence of the heritage of ages. When we decided to compile and translate these folktales this worry kept us uneasy throughout. However, we have tried our best not to harm the essence of the folktales. To err is human; our effort can't be free of errors or flaws. Worthy readers' feedback will highly be honoured, as it will be of utmost importance in compiling the upcoming volumes in a more befitting manner.

We are highly hopeful this humble series will go a long way in preserving, promoting and repackaging the folk heritage of Khow culture in the backcloth of media imperialism on the one hand and digital divide on the other.

We are thankful to Lok Virsa Pakistan for considering this series worth publishing.

Farid Ahmad Raza and Zahoor ul Haq Danish

Preface

Every cultural group, small or large, has its own folklore, which includes, besides material part of it, songs, proverbs, anecdotes, fables and stories. A piece of folktale is not the work of a specific author, reflecting his own world view, but is the product of a society's combined effort during long course of its evolution. Thus, these stories are built around the people's collective imaginations, ideals, and values. People receive these from the older generation and transmit to the next generation with certain modifications in line with needs of the age. This continuous addition of contents makes the folklore an archive of the values and ideals, held by previous generations.

Khovar is the language of Khow Ethnic People living in Chitral and Gilgit-Baltistan regions in the Northern Mountains of Pakistan. Khows are an ancient people belonging to Dardic branch of the Indo-Arian Race. Khovar language has many features common with its near relatives in the group like Kashmiri, Shina, Kohistani, Kalasha, Dameli and many others. However, it has been strongly influenced by Persian and Turkic languages from the North. Khovar has a rich folklore, which like the language itself, has its basics in the Dardic traditions, but bears clear marks of Central Asian influences.

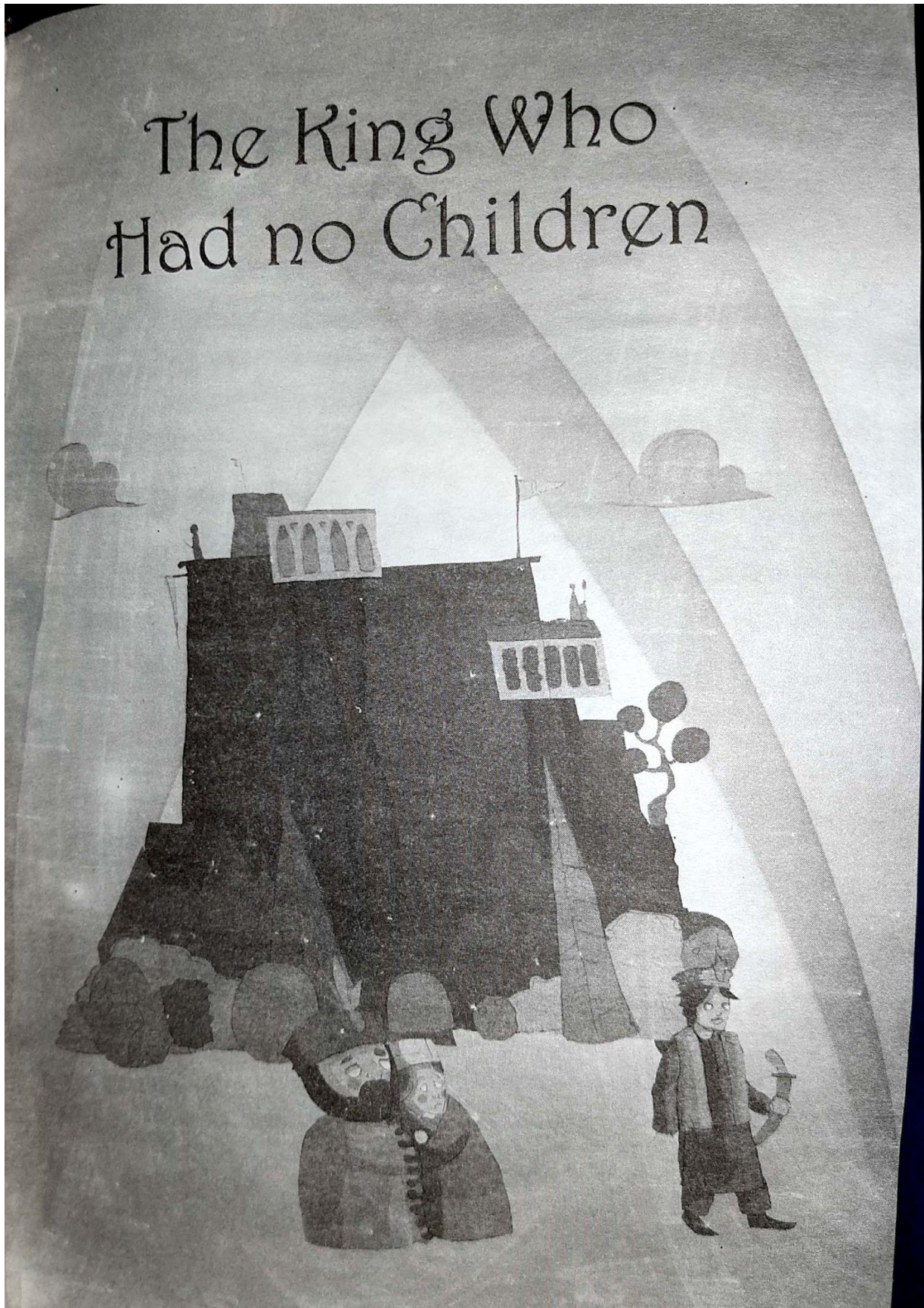
Story telling is deep rooted in Khow traditions. Story tellers used to be main source of entertainment and pastime in homes and gatherings. Local rulers kept story tellers with them who entertained the audience till late night. Likewise, story tellers were invited to perform in the homes of the nobility. Stories narrated in these gatherings were lengthy ones, either translated or adopted from Persian and Arabic Dastans like those of Amir Hamza or Alf Laila (The Thousand Nights). There were other stories of local origin, with true Dardic flavor. Adventurous princes, villainous demons, beautiful fairies and indifferent kings were the main characters in these stories. The drama in these stories was grand yet it was set in the narrow world of mountain valleys. There was yet another type of stories, those told to small children by grandparents and other elders. These were either fables with animals playing human roles or otherwise funny stories of caricature like characters. Khovar children's stories always have some morale attached to it. These were meant to educate the coming generation in values and norms of the society. These stories develop a sense of morality in the children by helping them differentiate between good and evil and to identify with the good.

Farid Ahmad Raza has painstakingly collected some of these stories from traditional story tellers, who are almost extinct now. Zahoor Ul Haq Danish has rendered them into English for the outside world. The combined undertaking of these two dedicated young men is a good effort at preserving the Khow Folklore and its introduction to the outside world.

Professor Mumtaz Hussain

| | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| Khowar Folktales Volume 1 کھوار شیلوغ - جلد 1 | |
| Research & Translation: Farid Ahmad Raza & Zahoor ul Haq Danish | |
| Table of Contents | شیلوغان فہرست |
| The King Who Had no Children | وے اژیروؤ باچھو شیلوغ |
| The Minister's Daughter | وزبرو ژورو شیلوغ |
| The Three Hunter Brothers | تروئے اپکاری برارگینیان شیلوغ |
| The Cruel Father and Three Sons | ظالم تت اوچے ژیزاوان شیلوغ |
| A Woman and Her Only Son | نانو ای پھلوک ژاؤو شیلوغ |
| The Three Brothers | تروئے برارگینیان شیلوغ |
| The Laughing Falcon | ہوساک سایورجو شیلوغ |
| The Stepmother's Story | نان بلیو شیلوغ |

The King Who Had no Children



The King Who had no Children

(Narrator: Assad ur Rahman, Miragram No. 2)

I would speak false to you, and you would speak false to me. Night would speak false to the day, and the day would speak to the night. Lion would speak false to fox and fox would speak false to lion. He who speaks false shall suffer for it.¹

Long time ago there lived a king. He was very rich, but had no children. Time passed by but not a single baby was born to him. One day a man came and told him that in the neighbourhood of his kingdom lived a holy man who would understand his problem, and his amulets would be of help. The king, one day, decided to visit the holy man.

After listening about his problem the holy man gave him an amulet and some other talisman. "Now you will have a son," he said to the king's surprise "And I will suggest him a name. His name will be Mughal Khan." The king accepted this with a grateful heart. The holy man then told him how to use the talismans. The king returned to his palace and gave the tokens to the queen, as prescribed by the spiritual healer.

Days passed into weeks, weeks passed into months, and the queen conceived a baby.

One good day a son was born to them. He was exquisitely cute, and the parents took great care of him. He grew up into a handsome young man. One night while he was sleeping he had a dream. In the dream he saw an exquisitely pretty girl. He passionately fell in love with the 'Dream Girl'. Since he was the only son of his parents, therefore his father had provided him almost everything he wanted. After the vision and love, the son kept losing his interest at home.

One day he told his mother, "Mother! I am leaving this palace and this kingdom. They do not belong to me. I am going away to some other land." The tearful mother said, "You are our only son, dear! Your father's throne belongs to you. His riches belong to you. Everything belongs to you. Do not leave me, your mother, at this age!" But the son was not moved, and insisted upon leaving soon.

One day while the father—king—was at his court honouring a royal meeting, the son decided to leave the palace escaping the notice of his mother. But the mother saw him, called him back and handed him a sword which belonged to the king. "Oh, my dearest son! If after all you are stubborn to leave, take this sword with you. You will need it one day." The son took his leave and the tearful mother saw him off.

He was a swordsman, known across the kingdom for his skills at sword. At a very young age he had come to be known as 'Mughal Khan the Fighter'. He would go to every town and village of the kingdom and fight the swordsmen. Other swordsmen and fighters of the town were desperate to defeat him in duels.

¹ While narrating a folktale in Khowar language these lines are uttered by the narrator as a kind of brief preamble to the story. Such lines are called "*Sulook*" of the folktale in the local language.

On his way towards an unknown destination, he saw a man was walking towards him carrying a huge tree on his shoulders, the branches of which covering the path. When he came closer Mughal Khan asked him not to block the path and move aside. The tree carrying man said, "You should move aside and let me pass. I am going to fight Mughal Khan the Fighter." No sooner did utter these words than Mughal Khan took hold of his arms and held him up. "I am Mughal Khan. Come on, fight!" "Let me down. I will be your slave," the man pleaded for mercy. Mughal Khan got him down and they, together, walked on.

They had crossed a few miles when they saw that a man was coming towards them, carrying a whole market on his shoulders. The man shouted at him to move aside and not to block the path. "Move aside," the man shouted, "I am going to fight Mughal Khan the Fighter." Hearing this Mughal Khan held him up and roared, "Lo! I am Mughal Khan. Come and fight me!" The terrified man pleaded for mercy, and only then he put him down. Together the three of them walked on, as friends now.

After they had walked for a few more miles they saw a man coming towards them. He was strong man, as was wearing grindstones in his arms. He shouted at the man to move aside and not to block the path. "You should move aside," shouted back the man "I am going to fight Mughal Khan the Fighter." "I am Mughal Khan! Come, fight me!" He held him up. The man pleaded for mercy, and, thus, was put down.

Then all of them together went on and reached a place after day-long journey. Here they saw a shack, and decided to spent the night in it. It was deserted long before. They could not light fire. Meanwhile, one of them went outside and saw light at a far distance. He came back and suggested to go there and fetch some fire, so that they could cook something. They agreed and sent the grindstone-wearing man to fetch some fire. He went there and saw a fire-breathing creature called *Dev* there. The Dev had lighted a fire and was grilling the whole carcass of a donkey. It saw the man, growled at him and said, "You have come on time. You will serve as dessert at the last course of the meal."

The friends in the shack waited for him. When he was late to return, Mughal Khan sent the tree-carrying man after him. When he reached there, the Dev repeated the same words for him and kept him too. He also got late. Then Mughal Khan sent the market-carrying man after them. The Dev showed the same intention for him and detained them all. When neither of them returned, Mughal Khan took his sword and went after them himself.

Approaching the fire he saw that the Dev had forced them sit beside him, so that he could devour them all after having done with the carcass of the donkey. He was, now, eating upon it. No sooner did Mughal Khan enter than the Dev growled, "You came at a good moment. I shall savour you over the meal." Without wasting a moment Mughal Khan took to fighting the Dev. He held him up and took him down with might. The Dev pleaded to spare his life, and pledged that he would be his lifetime servant.

With his friends thus saved and the Dev as his protector-servant Mughal Khan took to his way towards an unknown place. They walked on and on till they reached a place and decided to stay there for the night. Mughal Khan, then, said to his friends, "You should stay here. I am hanging my sword on the wall, right above your heads. If my sword swings, then come after me. Otherwise, you all stay here and wait till I return." With this instruction he hung his sword at the pillar. When he was about to leave alone, the

servant Dev said to him, "I am your life-time servant. Take me with you. I will render you a great service one way or the other." Saying this, the Dev accompanied him.

They, thus, walked on till finally they reached a place where they saw a large *godown*. This was a very large place and a strange kingdom, they discovered. They saw that everything was getting ready on its own: meals were getting cooked on their own; water was getting boiled on its own. There were simply no human hands at work, and no human beings around.

He intended to enter the castle. They went to the main gate and discovered that it was a large iron gate. The Dev broke it open, and said to Mughal Khan, "I am feeling too hungry, and will be looking for something to eat in the godown. You please enter the castle."

Mughal Khan entered the castle. His eyes fell on an exquisitely fair lady sitting inside. First she smiled looking at him, and then broke into tears. "Oh, fair young man!" she said, "Why did you come here? This castle belongs to a Dev. He has forcefully kept me here." "Dear sister, I have set out in this journey on compulsion," Mughal Khan said, "I have come after a dream, a vision." The lady said, "You sit here. I will get you some tea." Mughal Khan told her not to bother. "I have only got tired," he said "Rub my head instead." The lady, then, placed his head on her lap and started rubbing his head to his relief. While drowsing he said to the woman, "When the Dev approaches wake me up." The woman agreed. He had got very tired, and went to sleep immediately.

When the Dev approached the castle the woman could not wake him up. It started raining, with a heavy cloudburst of blood and stones outside. This was the sign of the Dev's return. She was helpless to do anything except crying out of pity for the young man. Tears rolling down her cheeks dripped on the face of the man. And he woke up.

When the Dev just entered the castle Mughal Khan jumped on him and took to fighting. After a tough fight Mughal Khan took him down and killed him at last.

"What lies ahead?" he asked the woman. "If you move on," she responded, "You might be harmed. His brother is guarding the place ahead. He will not spare your life." "I am moving on along with my servant Dev. When my friends reach at this castle, tell them that a young man has moved on taking along his servant Dev," said Mughal Khan. "In case we are in problem they will be of help for us." Saying this, Mughal Khan took to his way.

They walked on, till they reached another large godown with a large castle alongside it. The Dev broke the iron gate open. Mughal Khan entered the castle.

Lo! Here was the woman he had seen in the dream, an exquisitely fair lady! First she smiled, and then cried out of pity. "O, fair young man!" she began, "Wherefore did you come to this place?" "I have been walking for many days and many months to reach this place," Mughal Khan answered, "and all these days and months I have been looking for you." "You should go away please," cried the woman, "This castle belongs to the Monster, and he has forcefully kept me here. If he returns he will spare neither you nor me. He will eat both of us up." "Do not panic," said Mughal Khan, "When the Monster approaches

the castle, wake me up.” Saying this he rested his head on the lap of his dream-beloved and fell fast asleep.

When the Monster approached, it started raining, with a heavy cloudburst of blood and stones outside. The woman could not wake him up. She cried out of pity for the young man’s life. Tears rolling down her cheeks dropped on the face of the young man, and woke him up. “Why are you crying?” asked Mughal Khan worrying. “The Monster has approached,” said the woman. Mughal Khan the Fighter got ready. When the Monster entered, he impulsively jumped on to him and took to fighting him. After a tough fight of pulls, pushes and jostles Mughal Khan the Fighter took him down at last, and killed him.

Getting rid of the Monster, Mughal Khan married his dream-lady. The new couples started living happily in the castle.

One day his servant Dev said to them, “I would stay with you, and sleep on the other bed in your castle. Do not wake me up. But remember: Do not ever let a human being, especially a woman enter the castle. If you do, your happy life would be spoiled. Stay happy together.” Saying this he went to a long sleep.

Mughal Khan would go out hunting almost every day, his wife would lovingly see him off and receive him at the main entrance of the castle when he would be returning from hunting.

A large running stream would flow through the lawn of the castle. This stream would, then, flow into a large channel, which would ultimately flow towards another kingdom in a far distance. The lady, Mughal Khan’s wife, would comb her hair sitting beside the stream.

One day the woman was combing her long hair sitting beside the running stream, as usual. A tangled strand of her hair fell into the stream, and was flown away without her notice. The running stream of water flowed it all the way into the next kingdom, where this water channel would run the king’s water mill.

It so happened one day that the royal water mill stopped running. The king ordered his subjects to find out the defect. The mending men discovered it: a long strand of hair had got tangled around the bladed rotor of the water mill, causing it to stop. Fascinated by the strand of beautiful long hair of a young woman, the king announced, “He who brings me this girl would ascend my throne as a gift: He would be the king of this kingdom!”

Hearing of the king’s announcement, an old woman came to the court and said, “Lord the king! I shall bring that girl to you if you are gifting me your throne. But for that your highness will have to provide me with three things.” “What are the things?” asked the king. “They are: a spinning wheel (*Chakhur*); a round breadboard (*Tumbit*); and a bread-twirler (*Goshini*).”

The king provided her all the three. Taking the tools the old woman set forth on a journey along the brink of the channel. After a very long walk she got to the castle where the newly married couple lived. Here she discovered to her satisfaction that the stream was flowing through the lawn of the castle and coming out from the watercourse beneath the wall. She started crying and begging for something to eat,

pretending to be hungry. "Won't someone feed me? I am dying of hunger!" She kept wailing, and lingering along the running stream.

Mughal Khan had gone out hunting. Upon returning he saw a poor old woman crying for food near his house. When his wife came to receive him at the gate he told her about the wailing woman, and said, "We too have parents of her age. We should let her in." Ignoring what the Dev had said, especially about women, they let her in. The Dev was already fast asleep. The old witch was very cunning; she had come with a dark design.

Mughal Khan's wife was very loving to him. Every time she would see him off when he went out for some task, and would receive him at the gate when he returned.

One day, after staying with them for a long time, the old woman asked Mughal's wife how dear was her husband to her. "He is dearer to me than my own life!" she answered. The old woman, then, asked her not to receive him at the gate one day and see how he feels. She chose not to receive her husband at the gate that very day. Mughal Khan came into the house and asked her why she didn't receive him that day. "It was just to test your affection for me," said his wife.

A long time passed after that. One day the old witch said to Mughal's wife, "Do not receive him today and see. When he feels it, ask him: 'What is your life tied to?'"

One day Mughal Khan had gone hunting. When he returned home, his wife didn't receive him, as suggested by the old witch. He asked his wife, "Why didn't you receive me at the gate today?" "First tell me," she enquired in response, "What tool is your life tied to?" "My life is tied to the knife," answered Mughal Khan.

The next day when Mughal Khan was out hunting, the old woman got hold of the knife which Mughal's wife would take great care of, and which his life was tied to. She folded the knife and buried it under the smouldering grate.

Mughal Khan returned from hunting with a severe pain in his belly. Entering the room he fell down on his bed and lost consciousness. The old witch enticed his wife and said, "Let's go out together, you will see a new world." She had remained confined to the small world of the castle. When they came out, she saw the world was truly new for her: broader and brighter.

"Come along," said the old witch, "We shall go to my parents. Both of them are alive." "Will they be mine too? Mughal Khan's wife asked. "Yes, they shall be."

Walking down the path along the channel she gave her the bread-twirler (*Goshini*) and said, "Here you are! Your parents have sent it for you." Further walking down the path, she gave the breadboard (*Tumbit*) and said, "Your parents have sent it too." They walked on until they reached the place where she had 'parked' the Spinning Wheel. They rode it together, and the old witch flew it towards the next kingdom.

When they reached the castle of the king, Mughal Khan's wife realized that this cunning old witch had enticed and tricked her. The witch, then, took her to the king. The king proposed her to marry him. She first rejected it, and then said, "I shall plant a date palm. When it grows into a tree and starts bearing fruits, only then I shall agree to marry you." She was still expecting that her husband Mughal Khan would come to her rescue one day.

A long time passed since the old witch had deceptively taken her in the castle of the king. Mughal Khan did not turn up. Day passed by. Months passed by. One day the date palm, she had planted, bore fruit.

Meanwhile, the sword that Mughal Khan had hung right above the heads of his friends started swaying. His friends were still waiting for him living in a small shack at the same place.

The servant Dev, who had gone with Mughal Khan, had been sleeping in Mughal's house. Mughal Khan had fallen unconscious due to severe pain in the belly. Back in the shack when the sword kept swaying, the three friends, as earlier instructed by Mughal Khan, went out looking for him.

They walked for a long time, until they reached the first castle where Mughal Khan had met the first lady. Seeing them the fair woman said, "Fair young men, wherefore did you come here?" "Our friend had come this way," they responded, "Taking a Dev with him as a guard." "Yes, he had come here," she informed them, "And told me about your expected visit to this place. Now it is long since he has gone ahead." She, then, cooked them a good meal, and after having it they set forth after Mughal Khan.

They walked for long days until they reached the next kingdom. Here they saw a castle at a distance. "Mughal Khan must be here somewhere," they said. Coming to the main gate of the castle they knocked. Nobody opened it. They banged the door. There was no movement inside. At last they jumped over the wall, now they were inside a large royal mansion. Entering the house they saw their friend Mughal Khan lying unconscious, all curled up. They saw the guard-Dev, who was fast asleep. They tried their best, but could not wake him up. They went into the town. Here they visited a spiritual healer, and talked to him about their friend's precarious condition.

The spiritual healer consulted his books, and informed them thus, "A folded knife has been buried under the smouldering grate in his house. This knife is what Mughal Khan's life is tied at. If you are able to unearth and straighten the knife, his life can be saved." They looked for a blacksmith in the town and took him along to the castle. The metal-man unearthed the knife. He carefully unfolded and straightened it, then whetted and cleaned it. Now, lo, Mughal Khan opened his eyes! Then they tried to wake the Dev up. They shook him, they jerked him, they beat him. He didn't budge. They went into the town again and brought another blacksmith. He beat his legs with a heavy iron lever. The Dev awoke now. "I had slept only last night," he said stretching his limbs, "You shouldn't have awakened me." Seeing them around he wondered, "What has happened? Is all well here?" Mughal Khan told him that his wife had left them. "I had warned you against human beings, especially women. I had told you to keep guard yourself against their curse. They are cunning enough to harm you anytime."

Without wasting more time, all of them set out looking for Mughal Khan's beloved wife. "Follow me now," said the Dev, and kept walking along the water channel, with Mughal Khan and his friends following him.

They kept walking along the channel, until they reached a place where they saw some feast like event. People were coming to attend the feast, and some were leaving, having had their share of meal. They asked the people, "What is this feast for?" "It is for the king's marriage," they responded, "The nuptial day has almost approached. He has arranged this open feast well in advance." The Dev was feeling too hungry. No sooner did he see the items of the feast than he leapt on them and gobbled everything. After having all the meal he moved on towards the court of the king.

The old witch was sitting in the front chair, waiting to ascend the throne as promised by the king for bringing him the most amazing woman to marry. The king was about to gift his throne to her. The old witch, meanwhile, saw Mughal Khan coming, and cried for help. She tried to escape, but Mughal Khan deftly drew his sword and slew her. Then he leapt on the king and sliced his head off. The Dev devoured every dead body which was felled by Mughal Khan's sword. They searched for the exquisite woman in the castle. Lo! Mughal Khan rescued his beloved-wife at last.

He brought his exquisite wife to his own royal house in his father's kingdom. As he was the only son of his loving parents, he ultimately came to them after all these adventures.

They lived happily ever after.

The Three Hunter Brothers



The Minister's Daughter

(Narrator: Rahila Karim, Mroi)

Once upon a time there lived seven monsters in a kingdom. The king, of the kingdom, had one daughter. She would confine herself in the castle, and never go outside. One evening her friend, a minister's daughter, came to her and said, "Since you never go outside on day time, lest strangers' eyes should see you, why not go outside at this time!" Saying this she persuaded her. Then she got a horse saddled for the princess, and called a few ministers as her guards. And now they were on their way, with the princess on her horse leading them.

On the way they reached a place, where they saw some light at a distance. They went towards the light and, to their surprise, saw a large gate there. They pushed-open the gate and entered, thinking that some ceremonial feast might be going on inside. They walked on and saw no human movement around, until they got to another gate. One by one they opened seven gates and entered. Lo, this was a monster's den, and seven monsters were sitting inside. One of them was making tea, and the others taking it. "Come in," roared the monsters, "We were looking for you in the skies, but found you here on earth."

They entered and settled down. The monsters served them tea. They had added poison into it, so that the guests die soon to be an easy meal for them. The minister's daughter was very clever. She understood the foul play and alerted the princess. "Blow on the tea to cool it down," said she, "And pour it into your lap. Do not take it." She, in turn, passed on the news, and all were alerted about the dark plan of the monsters. All of them, unnoticeably, poured the tea into their laps while pretending to be taking it. When the girls didn't seem affected by the poison, the monsters served more cups. The girls repeated the same trick, and emptied the cups into their laps. The minister's daughter, then, said to the monsters, "It is quite hot here. Can't we find a lake or a pool around so that we might swim for a while to fight the heat?" "Why not," they said, "We do have a pool outside." Thinking that they might flee the den, one of the monsters snatched the princess's amulet from her neck and hung it on the pillar. Then they sent the blind she-monster to watch over them, lest they should flee. Going to the pool they handed their shawls---'dresses'--- to the blind monster to make her believe that they were actually going to swim. Then they picked up stones, and threw them into the pool turn by turn, pretending that they were jumping into it. After a while they came to the blind monster, pretending to have swum, and asked her to return their 'dresses'. Taking their shawls, they no longer wasted their time. They ran to their horses and galloped away. In the panic they forgot the princess's amulet. In a little while they got back to the castle safely.

The princess scolded the minister's daughter, "You persuaded me to go along with you outside. Now bring me my amulet at any cost! Otherwise, my Baba will get offended." "I shall get it for you," she said, "Do not be worried." She, then, blackened her face with soot, put on worn out clothes and set out towards the monsters' den again. Reaching there, she kept sitting in front of the entrance. Meanwhile, the monsters came out. "Who are you?" asked the monsters, "And what are you doing in front of our den?" "I am your mother," said she, "Your father had once expelled me from my home. You were kids

then." The monsters were not moved, nor were they ready to accept it. The blind she-monster, however, insisted that she might be their mother, and insisted to let her in. The others warned her that if she turned out to be someone else and not their mother, then they would kill her (the blind she-monster) as a punishment. She agreed to it, and, thus, they let her in the den and kept her.

The six monsters would, usually, go up to foothills searching for food. And the blind she-monster would remain at the den to watch over it.

One day she said to the other monsters, "Since our mother has returned to watch over the den now, take me with you into the foothill. I have never been there." They agreed to take her along on one condition. "If she does any wrong to our den," they warned her, "Then we shall kill you in the foothill." The blind monster agreed to it, and went along with them leaving behind their 'mother' to keep an eye on the den. She saw them off, pretending to be their true mother. She kept waving at them until they disappeared behind the edge of the hill.

Then she came into the den, got hold of the princess's amulet and wore it around her neck. There was some oil in a container, she sprinkled it across the den, put it on fire, and quickly set forth to the castle.

When the monsters, after having collected wood and food, were returning to the den they saw, from the edge of the hill, a tower of black smoke billowing into the air from the burning den. They beat the blind she-monster to death, put her carcass into a sack and dragged it all the way down to their den. Soon they extinguished the fire, and collected a few things which were not yet burnt.

The eldest monster, then, made up a large wooden box and put all the other monsters into it to carry them away thus.

The minister's daughter was very sharp and intelligent. She sensed some danger before hand, and told the daughters of all ministers to collect embers in large vessels on a particular day. "The monster will surely come up that day," she told them, "Carrying all his brothers in a wooden box." All the girls collected embers in large numbers. Lo, the monster turned up that day, carrying a large wooden box, pretending to be a Kochi---a vendor. He kept the box in the veranda, and called for something to eat, as he was hungry. "Open the box," he, then, called at the daughters of ministers, "And choose items for yourselves." They agreed to do so. Some of them opened the large lid of the box, while the others poured the embers in large vessels onto the monsters sitting inside, and locked the lid. "Did you look at the stuff?" called the monster at them. "Yes we have," responded one of the girls, "Thank you. Now you can take it away." The monster, thinking that his brothers might have taken a due revenge, wasted no time there, carried the box and took to his way. Running to the river bank, he called to his brother-monsters in the box, "Did you beat them hard?" But there was no response. He called again loudly, "Did you beat them all?" No response was to come from them. He opened the lid of the box, and it was all ashes inside. He lost his temper, and threw the box into the river and returned to his den.

Next he planned to dig a tunnel from his den all the way into the castle.

He dug a tunnel up to the castle. The minister's daughter, again, sensed that the monster would surely play another foul game to take revenge. "He would dig a tunnel," she warned her friends, "And would enter our room from beneath the floor." Her friends rejected the idea. "He simply cannot do that," said they. She insisted upon collecting embers and getting ready for the anticipated danger. All of them, thus, collected embers in large vessels. "When he approaches our room digging a tunnel," the minister's daughter told them, "A strong wind would blow, and there shall be snowfall." They agreed and got alert. Meanwhile, a strong wind blew and it immediately started snowing in flakes. All the girls were in their sitting room. Lo, a large hole was dug up from beneath the floor. They rushed to the brink of the hole and emptied the vessels of embers into it. The monster got burnt and died in his self-dug tunnel.

Thus, the minister's daughter with her cleverness killed all the enemy monsters and lived with her friends happily ever after.

The Three Hunter Brothers



The Three Hunter Brothers

(Narrator: Saifus Samad, Werkup Torkhow)

Once upon a time there lived three brothers. They would go hunting together. One day when they returned from hunting they found, to their surprise, that the meal had been kept ready at home. They wondered as to where the meal came from, or how it got cooked. They had the meal.

The next day when they returned from hunting, the meal was again ready. Now they thought seriously as to who had been preparing it for them. The eldest of them said the next day, "I shall remain at home today. You go hunting without me." He remained at home, hiding himself in a blanket on a bed. Lying there for a long time, he went to sleep. When he woke up he saw, to his surprise, that the meal was again ready and set there. Meanwhile, his brothers returned from hunting. Seeing the meal all set they asked him, "Who brought us the meal?" "I couldn't find out," he responded, "I had slept. When I woke up it was there." His younger brother said to him, "You couldn't find it out. Tomorrow I shall stay at home, and you both go hunting."

The two brothers left for hunting the next day, and he kept hiding in the blanket. Waiting and waiting for someone to turn up, he also fell asleep. When he woke up the meal was all prepared and set. Meanwhile, the two brothers returned from hunting. "Who brought us the meal?" they asked. "I couldn't find out. I had also slept. When I woke up, I saw the meal ready and set."

The youngest brother decided to stay at home the next day. When the two brothers left for hunting, he lay on the bed hiding in the blanket, and looking through a small rent. There was an iron bar across the skylight of the house. Meanwhile, as he was looking through the rent, a girl settled on the iron bar and then crawled down into the house. While she was hurriedly cooking meal for them, the boy leapt and grabbed her. "Who are you?" he called out, "What are you doing here?" The girl responded, "Since you have none to cook meal for you. I have been doing it." "Would you like to live with us, in this house, as our sister?" asked the boy. "Yes, I will," she approved of the idea. The two brothers returned from hunting. They decided to keep her with them as their sister. The three brothers also had a pet, a crippled pigeon.

"You go on hunting," she said to them the next day, "I shall prepare meal for you. You no longer need to worry. I shall be doing all this for you as your sister." The brothers said to her, "Keep one thing in mind. Do not ever let the embers in the grate be blown out. Cover them properly and keep them smouldering." She agreed.

One day the brothers brought her beads as gift. When they had gone hunting, she went up to the roof. Sitting close to the skylight, she started to string the beads onto a cord. Meanwhile, it slipped off her hands and fell down into the grate. She came down and stirred the ash looking for the beads. The uncovered embers burned out, and there was no smouldering left to light a fire. She went to a house in the neighbourhood seeking some fire. That house belonged to a witch. The witch's pet cat was at home when she entered. The cat gave her some fire. Finding a good company in close neighbourhood, the girl thought, "I shall visit her occasionally to chat with her."

One day, when the girl was alone at home she went to the witch's house to chat with the cat. The cat had some beautiful flowers in hand. "Won't you give me those flowers?" asked the girl, "I shall keep them for my brothers." "No," said the cat, "There is a garden down there. Why don't you go to the garden and pluck flowers for your brothers yourself?" She decided to go by herself some day.

One day when her brothers left for hunting, she went to the garden to pluck flowers for them. This garden belonged to the cat's mistress---the witch. When she reached the garden one of her feet was pricked by the witch's peg (*Goro Iskov*). And she fell down as dead. The witch carried her body up a walnut tree and put it there over the trunk. When the brothers reached home they found out that their sister was missing. They got immensely worried, and searched for two to three days, but couldn't find their sister. The limping pigeon, their pet, was also missing from their house.

One day, the king's shepherd was passing by the garden, driving the king's goats. He saw the body of a maiden over the trunk of the walnut tree. He got it down, and saw that it was a body of a very beautiful girl. "She is not dead," he thought, "One of her feet has been pricked by the witch's peg. Once the peg is removed, she will come back to life." He carried the body all the way to his master, the king. When the witch's peg was dug out from her foot, she came back to life. The king, then, married her. Her grief-stricken brothers were still remembering her, but what could she do now! She could not ask about their condition and their life from anyone.

The king, her husband, had many pet pigeons. She would lay grains for them every day. While she laid grains for them on the roof, she noticed that the pigeons after having eaten to fill themselves they were carrying away one grain each in their beaks.

One day she asked them, "You eat to your full here, then why do you carry these grains in your beaks?" "One of our friends is crippled," said the pigeons, "We are taking these grains to him." They surely were talking about her brother's pet pigeon, she understood. "Bring that pigeon with you tomorrow," she asked them. And they agreed.

When pigeons came up the next day, they brought along the crippled pigeon. She related to the pigeon whatever had happened since she had gone out to pluck flowers for her brothers. "You go back to my brothers," she said to the pigeon, "And bring them along with you to this castle. Come in the evening so that you escape people's notice. We, together, shall flee this place in the dead of night."

The pigeon conveyed the message to her brothers. They came to the palace in the evening, as instructed by their sister. The king had no knowledge of all this. She kept her brothers in hidey-holes, and told them, "When it is enough late into night, I shall come to the open cellar down there in the fields."

In the dead of night, when the brothers were awaiting her in the cellar, she sneaked out of the castle, and in a moment she was with her brothers. Thus, they fled the castle and returned to their home.

They lived happily ever after.

The Cruel Father and Three Sons



The Cruel Father and Three Sons

(Narrator: Muhammad Nasikhuddin, Werkup Torkhow)

Long long ago there was a man who had three sons. The father was very cruel to them. The youngest son, especially, was a victim of his cruelty. The three brothers would go to the hill daily to collect and fetch firewood. For the eldest brother was the share of fine bread, *Sanabach Tiki*². His rope was also quite good and well-woven. The wooden pole *Awrini*³, he was given, was also long and strong. The second son's share was a simple wheat bread. His rope was good, but not as fine as that of the eldest brother. The wooden pole, he was given, too was hardly good. The youngest brother's share of bread was not a good one at all. His rope was also very loose and weak. The wooden pole, he was supposed to carry, was also brittle and tiny. Taking these belongings and implements they would go collecting firewood every day.

One day, while collecting wood, the eldest brother said, "If by a happy chance you find gold here. Who will you gift it to?" The second brother said, "I shall give it to my father." The eldest brother said, "I shall also give it to our father. He is a nice father. He takes good care of us." The youngest brother said, "I shall give it neither to my father, nor my mother. Why should I give it to them! They are harsh and cruel towards me. Neither they provide us good rope and pole, nor do they feed me with fine food. They behave with me very harshly." To his elder brothers' amazement he continued, "When I have carried the bundles of wood all the way down, they brawl out at me saying 'this is so small a burden, these logs are of no use.' Why should I gift my gold to such cruel parents?" The two brothers beat him harsh and broke his leg.

They carried their bundles of firewood and reached home. "Where is your youngest brother?" asked their father. "Father, he abused you," they answered, "And we have broken his leg and left him up there." "You did well," said the father, "You had better kill him for that."

The youngest son with his broken leg struggled to walk, and limped to a herd of goats. These goats belonged to an old witch who was blind with one eye. He kept lying in the herd. Then he moved to the pen along with goats and kept living with them. At every meal time he would secretly limp into the house and eat the old witch's favourite dessert, *Shoshp*⁴. The woman would prepare this dessert for the whole month, and would eat a small portion of it daily. The boy would enter her house and sit by her left side, the blind eye's side, and would eat of her dessert. Thus he would secretly join her every day at her eating time.

One day, to the woman's surprise, the dessert lasted for hardly fifteen days. The worried old witch went to a wise man in the neighbourhood to ask about this. "I prepared dessert and it lasted for the whole month," she complained, "But for this month the dessert lasted for only half a month. What might be the reason?" The wise man answered, "Someone comes and sits by your blind eye's side, and joins you

² Traditional Chitrali bread with butterfat kneaded with wheat dough.

³ This pole is used for balancing the bundle of wood or animal forage while carrying it downhill.

⁴ A traditional Chitrali dessert made with sweetened wheat flour and ground walnut.

when you are eating of the dessert. Next time when you are eating, add pepper seeds to the side of the dessert which he eats from, your blind eye's side. When the pepper makes him sneeze, then grab him up."

When she was eating of the dessert one day, she did as instructed by the wise man, and grabbed the boy up. "Who shall rescue you now?" she shrieked at him, "You have eaten my dessert-stock of fifteen days. I am strangling you to death now." "Do not kill me," pleaded the boy for mercy, "I shall live with you as your son. I shall drive your goats. You will rest at home. And when I shall have driven all your goats back to their pen, we shall be living together happily." The old witch agreed to it and spared his life. The boy kept living with her.

The old woman had an opponent, another old witch, who lived with her husband, an old man. Their house was situated at a distance from the one-eyed old witch's.

"Don't ever go to that house," said the one-eyed witch to the boy one day, "They are my opponents." "I won't go there," agreed the boy.

He would drive the woman's goats daily, and upon returning they would have meal together. They were, thus, living happily ever after.

One day when the boy was driving the herd in the pasture, he thought to himself, "Why not visit that house out there, and see by myself what kind of creatures my mother's rivals actually are. And why do they oppose my mother." He headed towards the house. Approaching it he saw that the old man was ploughing his field. He went to him and said, "Let me help you in ploughing the field, Baba! I am also like your own son." The old man and the old witch used to see him living with their opponent old witch, and they considered him her son. When the boy offered to help him, the old man handed him the plough and said, "Plough the field smoothly. Meanwhile, I shall go into my house and get some water." The old man headed to his house. When he entered his house, the boy left the plough, ran to the roof of the house and lay around the skylight, *Kumarh*⁵, to overhear his conversation with the old witch, his wife.

They were steadfast opponents of the boy's 'mother'. He overheard the old man talking to his wife, "When he has ploughed the field I shall send him here to take some tea. You fill the large kettle with oil and boil it hot on the grate. Then set up the ladder against the skylight frame. The sword is hanging at the main pillar. When he comes here for tea, tell him to climb up the ladder and get some logs of wood from the roof. When he will be climbing the ladder, get hold of the sword and slit him hard. He will fall down into the boiling oil. And, thus, we shall eat him when he is grilled." The old woman approved of the trick. Overhearing all this, the boy immediately jumped down from the house-roof, ran to the field and took to ploughing.

In a little while the old man came to him and offered to be given a turn in the work. "Go into the house my boy," he said, "And bring us some tea. We shall take it together." The boy entered the house, where the old woman was well into the plan, with the large kettle on the grate and the ladder put up against

⁵ A skylight in the roof of a traditional Chitrali mud-house; which is used for lighting and moving smoke out of the house.

the skylight. "Well my boy," she said to him, "Please climb up the ladder and get me some logs of wood from the roof. I shall get the meal prepared, and we will eat together in the field." The boy courteously responded, "Dear grandmother, I don't know how to climb the ladder. Can't you first climb a few steps and show me how to do it? Then I shall climb up on to the roof and get you the logs." The old witch, unmindful of the boy's trick, climbed up to the halfway of the ladder. The boy got hold of the sword at the pillar and sliced her body into two. Lo, it fell down into the kettle and got broiling. When it was all grilled, the boy hid himself behind the door with the sword in his hand. After quite a long time the old man walked up to the house. Entering the house he saw that the boy had killed his wife and, lo, the body parts were getting grilled in the large kettle. The boy was nowhere to be seen. The fire of anger gripped his heart and his body became stiff like steel. "I shan't leave him now," he growled, "I shall tear him into a thousand pieces." He turned to the door. When he approached the door, the boy wasted no moment and drew the sword on him with might. The old man fell down dead. He dragged his body to the grate and put it, too, into the grilling kettle. Then he ran to the house of his mistress 'mother'. "Mother," he cried out excitedly, "I have killed your rivals and got you rid of them forever. Come along! I have grilled them too. Eat them up now." The one-eyed witch ran to the house, and devoured them both in just four bites.

The boy and she, then, returned to their home. Their herd doubled now, and they also got rid of their rivals.

Thus, they lived happily ever after.

A Woman and Her Only Son



A Woman and Her Only Son

(Narrator: Ummer Uddin, Werkup Torkhow)

Once upon a time there was a woman, who lived with her husband and their only son. One day her husband died suddenly. The woman gave her son some money and sent him to market to bring some rice. On the way to market he saw a man coming up who was selling cats. "Cats for sale," he was calling. The boy went to him and asked, "How much does a cat cost?" "One hundred rupees," answered the man. The boy paid the money and brought the cat home. "I had told you to bring some rice," called out the angry mother, "Why did you bring this cat?" The boy said, "Mother, when I go somewhere and you are alone at home, the cat will give you company. It will snort you stories, and will kill your boredom." The mother agreed and kept the cat.

The next day, the mother again gave him some money to bring some rice from the market. The son left for market. When he reached there, a man selling Myna birds came up calling, "Myna birds for sale!" "How much does one cost?" asked the boy. "One hundred rupees only," answered the man. He paid the amount and brought the bird home. The angry mother shouted at him, "Yesterday you brought a cat instead of rice; now what is this you have brought? Why did you buy this useless bird? I had told you to bring some rice." "Dear mother," responded the son, "If you are alone in the house this bird will sing for you. It will quell your boredom." The mother agreed and kept it too.

The next day she again gave him some money and sent him to market to bring some rice. When the boy reached the market he saw that a crowd of people were beating something. Getting closer he discovered that they were beating the Blind Monster. He divided hundred rupees among them, five rupees to each man, and freed the monster. "Come along with me," said the grateful monster to him, "I shall take you to our castle. When I have let you in the castle, you should get hold of a goatskin, *Warang*, and a file." The Blind Monster further continued, "When you rub the file against the stone, it will turn the stone into a castle. When you sit on the goatskin, it will fly you wherever you like." The boy agreed to go with him.

The monster took him to the castle, and let him in through the entrance. The boy, as instructed by the monster, got hold of a dried goatskin and a file. Sitting on the goatskin he called to it, "Fly me! Fly me, goatskin!" Lo, the goatskin took to flying. With the file in his hand, he was now flying high over the town. When it came right above the castle of a king, the boy looked down and saw that the king's exquisite daughter was sitting in the lawn and knitting something. "Take me down goatskin," ordered the boy, "Take me down and land me on the wooden platform, Takht, where the lady is sitting." The goatskin got him down and landed him on the Takht where the princess was knitting at something. Lo, the princess also mounted the goatskin. Now it flew again with both of them 'on-skin'. They flew high over the town, and came over a large plain outside the town. It was evening now. The boy got it landed on the plain.

The boy, then, rubbed the file against a rock there. Lo, it turned into a large golden castle. They entered the castle, got married and kept living there. They lived happily in the castle for a long time. They, then, kept a Myna bird and a cat as pets.

They boy would go hunting for food, and the princess, his wife, would remain at home with the pets to give her company. One day the boy warned his wife, "You are free to roam around on this plain. But do not ever go to the sands of the river bank. The sand has got a minacious look, lest you should be inflicted with misfortune." The wife agreed.

One day, while the husband was out hunting, the princess thought to herself, "Why not go to the river bank and see for myself what bad omen can be there." Thinking so, she collected their washable clothes and moved to the river bank. While she was washing clothes sitting on the sands of the river bed, one of her golden pair of shoes fell into the river and was flown away. She returned home, and was very unhappy.

When her husband came home he asked about the reason of her being upset. "What is it that makes you upset?" "I lost my golden shoe to the river," she sighed. "Don't be upset. I will get you a hundred pairs of golden sandals. Forget that, and be happy." "That is true, but that was a very nice pair. You can't find one like that."

The water currents of the river floated the golden shoe downstream into a large canal which, then, flowed to another kingdom. One of the ministers of the kingdom was grinding wheat in his water mill, run by the water of that canal. The golden shoe, ultimately, got floated into the mill. The minister got hold of the shoe, and ran to the castle to gift it to his master the king.

The king got immensely fascinated by the shoe, and announced, "He who brings me the girl who wears this shoe, shall be given half of my kingdom and riches in gift." No one in the kingdom could display courage for the task. The news reached an old tattered witch living in the kingdom. She came and said to the king, "I shall get you the woman, the owner of the golden shoe." She further continued, "Before that, you should provide me ten large breads, along with ten earthenware vessels, *Ghans*, filled with the dessert *Shoshp*." The king agreed and ordered to feed her full and provide the necessary food stuff.

The old witch had a flying Spinning Wheel; she mounted it and flew it away. She flew over the kingdom, crossed it and landed on the sands of the river bank. She 'parked' the Spinning Wheel there, and walked up to the solitary castle. Reaching the castle, she kept scraping at the gate of the castle, and pleaded, "Let me in! Let me in!" But there was no answer. "Let me in," she was pleading loudly now. They didn't let her in. She kept pleading. The wife was insisting not to let her in. "Let me in," she pleaded again, "I shall wash your dishes. I shall do cleaning for you." The husband suggested letting her in, but his wife was obstinate. She was in no way ready to let the old witch in. Moved by her continuous pleading, the husband requested his wife to let her in. At last she let her in. The old witch, thus, pretending to serve them, kept living with them in the lone castle. She would do the dishes, would clean the house for them and would help the wife in domestic chores.

One day, when the husband was out hunting, the old woman said to the princess, "You get bored, living alone in the solitary castle. Let's go on an outing." She agreed to it, and, thus, they went out to the river bank. The old witch took her to the Spinning Wheel and said, "Let's ride it." She mounted it first, and the witch did later on. When both were on-wheel, the old witch said to the Spinning Wheel, "Fly us now!"

Lo, the Spinning Wheel took off into the air. It flew over the town and the witch steered it all the way to the kingdom.

She landed the Spinning Wheel at the castle, and led the princess inside. Seeing the exquisite princess the king's joy knew no bounds. The princess, realizing the trick, played dumb and stopped talking. Realising the king's intention to marry her, she sowed a date-stone and signed to them that if this seed grows into a date-palm and starts bearing fruits only then she will talk and marry the king.

Days passed into weeks, weeks passed into months, and months passed into years; till one day the date-palm bore fruits. The princess refused to talk even then. They tried their best to make her talk, but she was lip-locked. At last the king announced, "Whoever is able to make her talk, will get half of my kingdom as a gift." All women and men of the kingdom, and the king's courtiers crowded around her to persuade her into talking, but they couldn't. Then an old woman came and said that she would make her talk. She put a large vessel on the grate and filled it with milk. The princess, sitting among women around the grate, looked up at the skylight and saw that a few Myna birds had settled around the frame. She recognized her pet Myna among them. She had fixed her eyes on her pet and lost in thoughts. Meanwhile the boiling milk on the grate overflowed the vessel. "Daughter, daughter," cried out one of the old woman at her, "The milk is overflowing!" Hearing this, the princess with her eyes still fixed on the bird, spoke up unconsciously. "O, dear grandma," she said, "Oh, look at my pet Myna-bird up there! Let the milk overflow!" She spoke up at last.

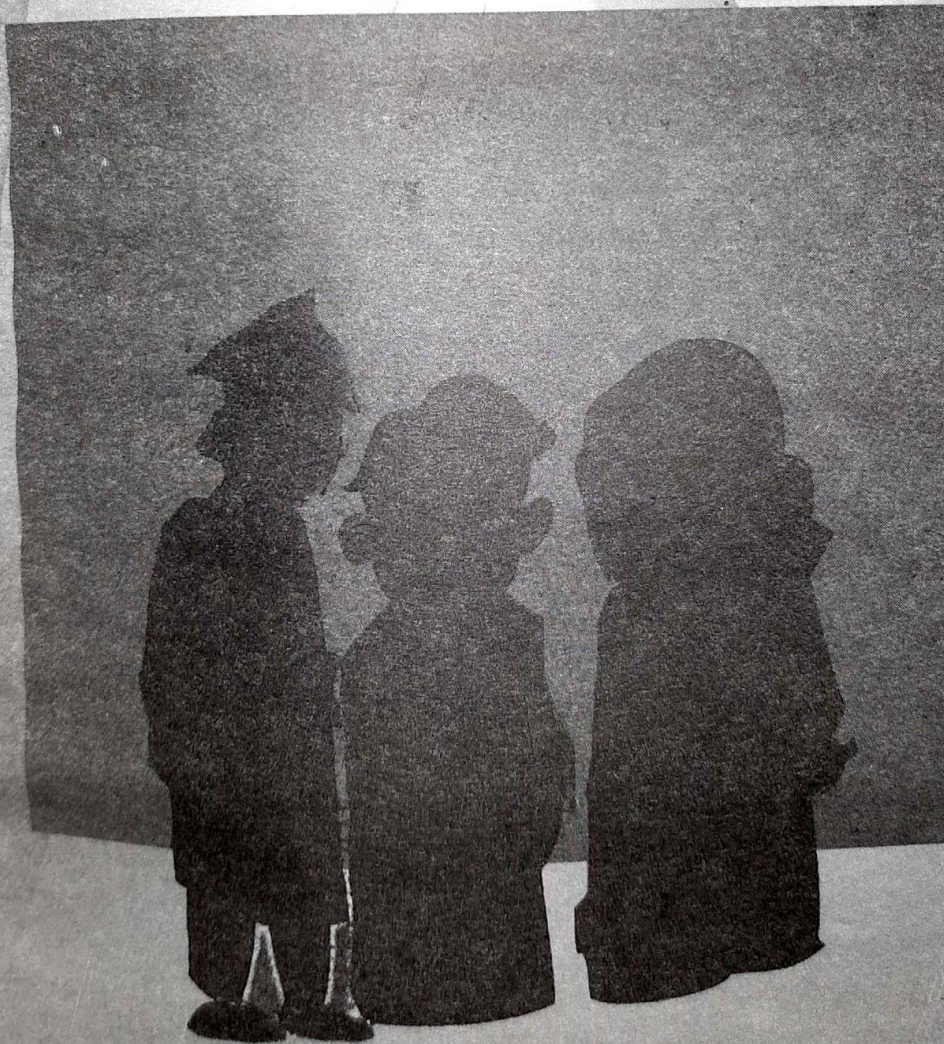
The delighted king gave half of his kingdom as a gift to that woman. He, then, dressed himself up and got ready for marriage with the exquisite princess. Preparations for the ceremonious royal marriage quickened. Everyone got to working. Meanwhile, the princess said to her pet Myna, "Be quick! Fly to our pet cat and tell her to drag the goatskin all the way here. It is in the room." She further cautioned the bird, "You watch around, lest people should observe her dragging it. When she is around here with the goatskin, you come and settle on the skylight, and sing. I shall come out then."

The Myna bird did as instructed. The cat dragged the goatskin all the way to the castle. When she got to the castle, the Myna flew up, settled at the frame and kept singing. The princess said to the women around, "I am just going outside. Will be back in a short while." She, then, ran to the cat; she settled on the goatskin; she took the cat in her lap; she sat the Myna beside her; she flew away from the kingdom.

When they landed at their solitary castle, she saw her husband in a pitiful condition. His hair had grown long and entangled, and his long nails had bent down into the ground. She dressed his hair, cut his nails, and cleaned him again into a fair young man.

They, then, started to live a happy life ever after.

The Three Brothers



The Three Brothers

(Narrator: Mukhtar Ahmad Sangeen, Booni Mastuj)

Once upon a time there lived an old man in a town. He had three sons---only three sons he had, there was no daughter. He had four gold blocks in his house.

Once it so happened that the old man died. He was buried by his sons, and while returning home after burial of the father, the middle child thought about the gold blocks, and a sort of greed invaded his mind. He thought they were three and the gold blocks were four in number. That as regards the extra gold he would be left out in any kind of distribution formula, because the eldest brother would take credit of being the first-born and the youngest one would have the advantage of his position as the youngest child in the family.⁶ Blinded by greed he stole one of the blocks, while the other brothers were still mourning their father's death.

When the mourning was finally over, with all the related rituals performed, the eldest son gathered the elders, friends and neighbours of the area in his house and addressed them with these words, "Respected elders and my dear friends! As you all are well aware that our father is no more with us. He has left some wealth for us in inheritance, which must be distributed among us in the presence of all of you, so that later conflicts may be avoided. If it is not done in time, it will result in unnecessary quarrels and disputes in the times to come, so it is wise to carry out the same as soon as possible."

The elders of the area were all sitting in the drawing room. The eldest son took leave of them and went after the gold blocks in the storehouse. To his surprise he found three blocks instead of the four that they had inherited from his father. One golden block was missing. He came back to his brothers and after telling them about the missing block enquired whether they had any idea where it was. The younger brothers instead accused him by saying that he had gone to take them, so he must have hidden them. This resulted in serious accusations and verbal assaults among the three. The elders tried to intervene and soothe them but all in vain. Failing to resolve the dispute, they advised the three brothers to consult a well-known and wise Qazi, judge, residing in the distant village to seek guidance in the matter.

They agreed to it and started their journey towards that village. On the way they came across a man who was walking briskly towards them. Reaching them he asked, "Brothers, has anyone seen my donkey?" The eldest brother said, "Which donkey are you talking about, the lame one?" He said, "Yes, the same." The middle one continued, "You are probably talking about the blind donkey, am I right?" He said, "Yes." The youngest brother said, "I hope it is the one carrying oil and honey on top of it?" "Yes, exactly," responded the man. The young man, however, said that they hadn't seen the donkey. The man got very angry and said how come he was saying they hadn't seen the donkey when they gave all indications of it. He said he would take them to the Qazi's court, only he could do him justice by ordering some punishment for them. Thus he also accompanied them and the four headed towards the Qazi's court.

⁶ In Khow culture the youngest child inherits most of his father's property.

While on their way they came across another man who said, "Dear brothers, has any one seen my wife?" The eldest son said, "Who are you talking about, the woman who was walking away from her home?" He said, "Yes." The younger one asked, "Are you talking about the one carrying a bundle on her head?" Again he said yes. The youngest brother then intervened, "I guess you are talking about the woman who was expecting a baby?" "Exactly the same," the man responded in excitement hoping he would get to know about the whereabouts of his wife. On the contrary the young man said they had no idea about that woman. The man got very angry and said, "You must have killed and then dumped my wife somewhere, because you give all indications of her but still say you haven't seen her. How is it possible? I will take you to the Qazi's court. He will give me justice." In his anger he continued, "You are murderers who have killed my wife." Thus he also got along, and the five of them together reached the Qazi's residence.

They were all presented in the Qazi's court. The Qazi asked them to present their case. The three brothers were about to say something when the donkey-owner intervened. Addressing the Qazi he said, "O, just man! Before deciding their case, which is their domestic one, it will be better if you resolve our mutual dispute." Qazi replied, "Alright, then say what you have got to say." "O, Qazi sahib", continued the man, "These three brothers have stolen my donkey. They give all indications regarding the animal but still deny seeing it." The Qazi turned to the three and said, "Young men! What is it that this man is talking about? Have you really not seen his donkey?" They responded, "Respected man of justice! It is true that we have described all details about the animal but it is also true that we haven't seen it. We are men of honour and will never do such a deed." At this the Qazi said, "Then how come you know about all the details of the animal, like it was lame and was carrying a heavy load etc? Was it revealed to you? How do you know all these things?" At this the eldest brother explained that they only made guesses about the animal which proved true. He said he guessed the donkey was lame because on his way he came across the hoof-marks of a donkey but there were the marks of only three hooves; one leg seemed to be dragged on the ground which must be due to the lame leg. Then he asked the second brother, "How did you come to know that it was blind? The young man said, "The animal's hoof-marks had passed through thick grass, but the grass was eaten only on one side. So it must be that the animal could see with one eye only." The Qazi finally turned towards the youngest brother and asked him, "Now you tell me, how did you know that it had oil and honey loaded on top of it when you did not even see it?" He said, "My lord! It is because we came across a narrow pathway, and on both sides of it there were marks of oil and honey left on it, and the wall was greasy. I, therefore, concluded that those marks must have been left by the donkey." The Qazi had nothing left to say, so he agreed with the responses of the three brothers and asked the donkey-owner to leave.

At his departure the other man, whose wife was lost, came to the front. He turned to the Qazi and narrated his whole story. He said the way those three brothers had described the woman clearly indicated that she was his wife, but upon inquiry about her whereabouts they denied even seeing her. At this the Qazi again turned to the young men and asked them to explain their position.

The eldest brother, again, started explaining the situation. He said he had reasons to believe that the woman was leaving her house in anger because when a woman does so she turns back repeatedly in order to ensure that she is seen leaving the house. "The footprints of the woman indicated that she had

turned back many times,” he said. The second brother, upon inquiry about his guess, stated that the footsteps indicated the woman had sat somewhere, and while standing up she had taken support of only one hand, so it might be that she was supporting some load on her head with the other hand. Lastly, the youngest brother’s turn came. He said, “My lord! Were it not due to her pregnancy, she would not have taken support of the ground while standing up. Her doing so indicated that she must be.” Upon this the Qazi was left with no other option except to absolve and acquit the three brothers of the blame.

After getting leave of the second man, the Qazi then turned towards the three brothers and asked, “Young men! Now you tell your case. Why have you come here at my court?” At this they told him all about their problem. They said they were three in number and had inherited four gold blocks from their father, one among them, however, went missing in their own house. The three brothers blamed each other of hiding it. As the case could not be decided by the elders of the area so they were advised to consult him based on his vast knowledge and wisdom. Upon hearing this, the Qazi got a bit nervous because he was already impressed to a large extent with the intelligence and wisdom of the three brothers. It seemed difficult for him to decide their case, because they were very intelligent people and even a slightest mistake would easily be caught by them and the Qazi’s credibility would be lost. He, therefore, asked them to spend that night at his place so that he might find time to think over different aspects of the case and give a better decision. He said, “My sons! You are my honourable guests and have travelled a long distance in order to reach here. Won’t you give me the honour to be your host for tonight? You will have some rest and tomorrow morning I will decide your case.” They accepted the offer happily.

The Qazi was a well-off man. He called his shepherd and ordered him to slaughter one of the finest goats for his guests. He also called the in-charge of the house as well as the cook and entrusted them with the responsibility of arranging finest dishes for the guests.

At dinner time the guests were served meal according to the orders of the Qazi. The three brothers were left to themselves for dinner. No one joined them in meal. The Qazi, however, concealed himself behind the door in order to listen to what they were saying.

As the Qazi left the room they started dinner. No sooner did the eldest brother pick up a piece of meat than he said, “It tastes of human flesh.” The second one remarked that the bread smelled of a dead body. The last one even went to the extent of saying, “The Qazi is a by-blow, and he is not a legitimate child of his father.”

The Qazi listened to everything that they said and left the place in anger and frustration. He called the shepherd and asked him to tell him the truth about the animal that he had slaughtered for the guests. The shepherd told him that soon after the birth of the goat its mother died of being hit by a rolling stone. There was no other milk-giving animal to nurse it at that time, so it was fed on human milk. “I got my wife feed it with her milk.” It meant, the Qazi thought, that the boy was right about the taste of the meat. Then he called the in-charge of the house and asked him to give him each and every detail about the flour from which the bread was made for the guests. “Respected Qazi sahib,” replied the in-charge,

“Actually there is a long story behind it.” Upon Qazi’s demand he, thus, continued, “When I took the wheat to the water-mill to grind it, it took a lot of time. The whole night passed, but it could not finish. I had something else to do, so I left half of the wheat in the mill and returned home with the flour. I could not go back for long, and so it remained there for many days. Upon my return there I saw that there was some dead body kept in the mill.” When he completed the story the Qazi thought to himself that the second guess was also true. It was due to the dead body kept in the mill that the boy said the bread smelled of dead human.

He asked the in-charge to leave and called for his mother. Upon her arrival he made her sit before him. Then, in a very relaxed manner he addressed her thus, “My dear mother! Today I want to discuss with you something which is a matter of life and death for me. I therefore request you to tell me three things very honestly. Otherwise I will kill both of us.”

His mother tried to calm him down by saying what had happened to him that in presence of guests in the house he was talking about committing murder. At this the Qazi got furious. Taking a pistol out of his pocket he asked his mother, “Tell me, am I your legitimate son or not?” The mother again tried to soothe him, “What are you saying son?” “Tell me, am I your legitimate son or not?” stressed the son. The mother tried her best to divert his attention but he kept on asking the same question, “Am I your legitimate son or not?” He said she must tell him the right answer; otherwise it would be her last day on earth. Failed in her attempts to soothe him, she said at last, “Actually you are not my real son.” “We were without children, me and my husband,” continued she, “When one night we heard the voice of a child crying outside our house. When my husband went outside, he found you there wrapped in a blanket and took you inside. He asked me to pretend to have given birth to a child, and we made an announcement in the neighbourhood that we had been blessed with a child. Thus we adopted you and from that day onwards I have always considered you as my real son.”

Thus the third guess of the three brothers also proved true. This further added to the tension and stress of the Qazi, because he thought deciding the case of such wise and intelligent people would be really difficult.

The Qazi had a daughter who was very wise and intelligent. She was watching while the Qazi walked up and down in the house in a much tensed manner. She saw the marks of tension and worry on her father’s face, and asked him the reason. The father said it was due to his guests’ case that he was worried. He said his whole fame of being a just man would be ruined if he became unable to do justice to them. He said, “I have come across three young men who are extremely intelligent, and have knowledge of the unknown. They made many wild guesses and all proved true.” In case he was unable to do justice to their case so, he would be misguiding the people and would stand unjust in the eyes of God. He would also be invoking the wrath of God. Hearing this, the daughter asked, “What is the nature of their quarrel?” The Qazi told her all about their problem. She said it was not a big deal. She asked her father to make them stay for that night and allow her to decide the case.

The guests were offered breakfast and then Qazi asked them to stay for a day more. He asked them to accompany him to his orchards and fields and to enjoy themselves. They agreed and spent the whole

day visiting the area along with the Qazi. In the evening the Qazi's daughter asked him to allow the whole family to have dinner with the guests. The Qazi had only this one daughter, and had no more children. He gave her permission to join them.

The Qazi's family, including his mother, wife and daughter sat at one side of the table and the guests took the other. After having dinner the guests addressed the Qazi and said, "Respected Qazi! We have been your guests for two days now, and have been very well served. It would be nice of you if you decide our case, so that we may take leave of you early in the morning tomorrow." At this the Qazi's daughter turned towards them rather than Qazi himself. She said, "My dear brothers! Which case are you talking about?" The three young men told her all about their situation. After listening to them she said, "Well, your case will surely be decided by my father, but before that I would like to ask you a question as you seem to be very intelligent and wise people."

Before asking the question she started narrating a story to them, "Once upon a time," she began, "there was a king in a certain kingdom. He had a minister in his court. Their houses were located face to face on each sides of a narrow gorge. They both had sons of the same age. The sons were best friends and were very close to each other. Inspired by their mutual love and respect for each other the common people of the area also started following suit. The two young men prince and minister's son did not like it; they thought there must be some difference between them and the common people. So they made a pledge with each other that whoever of the two got married first will send his bride to the other before talking to or even touching her. It was because they wanted to distinguish themselves from the common people by setting such a unique example of mutual friendship. Soon after this pledge the prince got married.

"On the wedding night the prince's room was beautifully decorated. The prince ordered to put a curtain in the middle of the room as a partition and placed his bed inside it. While he was lying on his bed, the servant brought his bride in the room and left. The moment the bride reached the curtain, the prince addressed her with these words, 'My dear wife! We have been married for life now. As long as we are alive we would be husband and wife. Wouldn't you do me a favour?' The wife said, 'Why not! Say what is it that you want me to do?' At this the prince told her about his promise with his friend and asked her if she would agree to it or not. The princess, in return, said, 'Being your wife it is my duty to obey you. I am your honour, and if you want me to help you fulfil your promise, I would take it as my duty. Saying this, the bride got ready to leave. 'Which path do I need to tread to go to your friend's house?' The prince told her about the way leading to his friend's house.

"She followed that road and reached the friend's room. It was also decorated with flowers and fashioned in the same manner as that of the prince. The prince's friend was sleeping in the bed inside the curtain. When the newly-wed bride of the prince reached the curtain, he jumped out of his bed and said, "My dear and respected sister! You and I are not allowed to sit together in the same room as you are my friend's, the prince's, wife. That promise was made between us at the spur of the moment without any conscious thought behind it. He fulfilled his promise by sending you here, and now it is my moral responsibility to send you back to him unmolested.' 'Outside my room,' he continued, 'there is a table and there are some gold coins lying there. Go and take them with you as gift from me.'

“Hearing this she took the gold coins with her and left the house happily. On the way back, she came across a group of robbers. They were very dangerous people and had no regard for anyone. They had killed people over petty issues. They surrounded the young bride, and asked her who she was and where she was coming from. She told them all about the pledge and friendship of her husband and the minister’s son. She said, “When I went up to his room, the minister’s son sent me back, saying you are just like my sister and the promise that we had made was just an emotional decision, and that you are not bound to follow it.’ She also told them how she was given the gold coins as gift from him, and how she was returning to her husband as chaste and rich lady.

“Listening to this the robbers thought for a while. Her story invoked their conscience and they thought if the prince could show so much generosity by sending his newly-wed wife to his friend just to keep a promise; and if his friend could be so generous as to send her back untouched and unmolested even having the opportunity, couldn’t they now show the same generosity by making her reach home safely? Thus they escorted her, and left her safely at the prince’s gate and went away.”

After narrating this story, the Qazi’s daughter put a question before the three brothers. She said, “Now you tell me which of the three incidents according to you is more important? Or in other words, who of them seems more generous to you, the prince, his friend, or the robbers?”

The eldest brother said it was the prince who acted very generously, because it was very difficult for him to give away his newly-wed wife, his honour, to his friend even before having any communication with her.

The youngest brother said that the minister’s son was more generous, because though he had come across a very beautiful lady and had all the opportunity to do whatever he wished, still he sent her back with such kind words.

The middle brother said, “According to me, the act done by the three robbers was more important. Look at them, they had every opportunity to take the coins, still they didn’t.” At this the girl turned towards him and said, “Dear brother, it is you who have stolen the gold block. You have to return it.”

As they say, ‘a guilty conscience needs no accuser,’ so the middle brother too responded in a manner which gave a clear hint of his guilt. And the dispute was, thus, settled.

The story ends here.

The Laughing Falcon



The Laughing Falcon

(Narrator: Mukhtar Ahmad Sangeer, Booni Mastuj)

I would speak false to you, and you would speak false to me. Night would speak false to the day, and the day would speak to the night. Lion would speak false to fox and fox would speak false to lion. He who speaks false shall suffer for it.

Long time ago there was a king who lived in a city. He had two wives and four sons. Three of them were from one wife, and one from the other. While he loved the former wife and the three sons, he detested the latter as well as the son he had from her. He had kept the detested wife and son at arm's length, so much so that he had built them a small mud house outside the royal palace and kept them there; whereas he had luxuriously been living in the palace along with his beloved wife and the three sons.

One night it so happened that the king had a strange dream. In the dream he saw the Laughing Falcon, which belonged to the Heaven Fairy. It was a miraculous falcon. Every time it fluttered it would drop gold and silver. He woke up in the morning to find himself overwhelmed by the vision of the marvellous bird.

He summoned his ministers, advisers as well as renowned intellectuals of the kingdom to an important meeting in his royal court. In the meeting he told them about his dream and asked their suggestions as to how could he get the Laughing Falcon, and who would help him in this cause. The consultation continued for quite a long time, and people came up with diverse suggestions, each according to his wisdom, discretion and experience. There was a very wise minister in his court, who said, "None but your sons can help realize your dream and get you the Laughing Falcon." The king approved of the suggestion and, without wasting time, ordered his beloved sons from his beloved wife to go and get him the bird at any cost. The despised son offered to go with them, as, he thought, it was his moral duty to do his father a service when he needed the most. So thinking he sought his mother's permission to join his stepbrothers in this cause.

His mother said, "You can be of no help to your step-brothers. They are pampered, featherbedded and beloved sons of his father. He has abundantly given them many things---riches, luxuries, etiquettes and skills---that you lack. Also they are smart, shrewd, and intelligent. They are simply everything you are not. You have lived a confined life in this tiny mud house. You have seen nothing, met no people, gone no farther than the tiny piece of land that is ours. You can't help them anyway." The son insisted upon going with them, as he had determined to offer his possible service to his father in this daring task. The mother had no option but to submit and allow him. She paid him farewell in tears, with prayers for safety and life loudly uttered after him.

The young man scurried after his brothers, who had set off long before. After a long walk he caught up with them on the way. They did not like him much, their contempt for him being inherent. On their way ahead they reached a place where there was a large maple tree. Right beneath the tree the path diverged into two, as if they were twin paths. There was an inscription on the tree that read, "**He who treads this path shall never return, and he who treads that path shall return.**" The beloved sons of the

king suggested that their step-brother go by the Path of No Return, and that they themselves would go by the Path of Return. Without objection the young man, the despised son, walked off by the strange path, the Path of No Return.

After he had walked a long distance alone he caught up with a very old man. He was senile, simple and ignorant man. The young man politely greeted him. He responded quite coldly. The young man walked along, with occasional chat marked by chosen and polite words. On the way they reached an overflowing nullah---a stream. The young man helped and supported the old man to wade across the stream. Next they reached a small house which, the old man said, belonged to him. While they were parting ways by the house the young man politely said to the old man not to enter his house without coughs and throat-clearing---a gesture to alert the insiders. Upon this the old man got angry and said, "Who are you to teach me manners?" and walked away.

When he abruptly entered his house, without alerting the insiders, he found his young daughter combing her hair, sitting quite openly, mindless of her father's abrupt return. The daughter said, "Father! You shouldn't have entered abruptly, without alerting me." The embarrassed father said falteringly, "Dear daughter! A friend on the way also told me not to enter that way. Anyhow, make some tea. I am quite tired and feel like taking tea." The daughter obeyed. Besides tea she baked a flat bread and broiled a few eggs for the traveller young man. Then she put the eggs on the bread and brought them to her father.

While her father was taking them to the young man, the daughter said, "Tell him 'the stars are crowded and the moon is full.'" The father did not understand what she meant by it, and paid no heed at all. Taking them to the young man he ate the larger half of the bread along with the eggs on the way, leaving only one egg and the smaller half of the bread for him. While the young man was eating the bread and the egg, the old man repeated the words of her daughter---"The stars are crowded and the moon is full." He understood what she meant. When he had eaten them he asked the man to tell his daughter upon reaching home that "Stars are scattered and the moon is broken apart." The father returned and reported the same to her daughter.

The old man was the first guard of the Heaven Fairy, and kept watch on the way. He had now developed liking for the young man. He went back to him, took him home and got his clever daughter married to him. The newly married couple spent their first night happily, and when it was morning the young man said to his wife, "Darling I actually have come out to accomplish a difficult task. If I am able to do it, that would be a great service to my father." He told her the whole story and said, "To tell you the truth, this is my story. I haven't come out seeking a woman for marriage. Now I have to pursue my task." The wife said, "We are the first guards of Her Majesty Heaven Fairy. My father tells me there are monsters of various types keeping watch over the path at different points ahead. You cannot go on, they will devour you. Don't go ahead please. You should go back to your home." Her husband didn't agree to her suggestion and said, "If I get devoured by them then all is over; but if I am fortunate enough to come back safely, then I'll take you home as my wife." Saying this he paid farewell to his wife, who was all in tears seeing him off on an uncertain journey.

The young man walked on and on until, after months-long journey, he reached a town. It was a strange town. Everything in the town was white---trees, mountains, rivers and the sky all were white. "The White Town", he thought. Strangely, there were no human beings to be seen in the whole town. This was a human-built and a human-less town at the same time. Not only humans, the land was devoid of all living things. No birds, no insects and no green trees were to be seen. He saw a large royal castle on top of a mound, and climbed up. It was a strange castle, completely devoid of people. He went on from door to door and found not a single human being. At last when he knocked at the tenth room, a private room in the centre of the castle, and entered he saw an exquisitely pretty woman sitting inside. He greeted her politely and respectfully. She also greeted him politely and said, "Oh, good young man! Oh, self-destroying young man! Why did you come to this place? Go back as quickly as possible. Go away! If the Blind Monster comes and finds you here he will devour you and me together. Go back soon please." When the young man didn't budge, she shouted, "Oh, self-destroying man! Go back soon. When the Blind Monster comes he will devour you up. He is a savage. He feeds on human flesh. He has eaten up my parents, who were emperors of this land. He has eaten up all the rulers, courtiers, the army, the subjects, as well as all the riches and treasures of this unfortunate land. He has spared me only because he likes my beauty, and has kept me here as his wife. He will never spare you when he comes up. Go back as soon as possible." The young man said, "If, by destiny, I am to spend the night in this world I cannot spend it in the grave; and if, by destiny, I am to spend the night in the grave I cannot spend it in this world. I am tired, and badly want to rest for a while. I will be lying there on the bed. You kindly rub my head a little till I sleep. And when the monster approaches, wake me up. Are there any signs or foretokens of his return?" "Yes," the lady said, "when he is approaching the castle it rains rocks and slabs, with stinky smell and deafening roar of thunder all around." "Right. Then wake me up when he approaches", the young man said and instantly went to sleep, with the exquisite lady sitting beside and rubbing his head.

After he had slept for a while, there was a roaring thunder outside, and a stinky smell spread all around and gripped the castle. The lady thought, "If I do not wake the young man up he will surely devour him, and if I do still he will not spare him. What to do? To wake him or not to wake him?" Confused in these thoughts and feeling enormous pity for the young man she started crying bitterly. Tears rolling down her cheeks dropped on the face of the young man. He woke up, looked up at her face and asked the reason of her crying. "The monster is approaching," she said. With a single jerk the young man got up, took up his sword, unsheathed it and ambushed behind the gate of the castle. Peeping through a hole in the gate he saw the monster carrying and dragging huge sheaves and trees from the mountains. Approaching the gate he smelled of a human, and called out, "I smell of a human being. I smell of a human being." Repeatedly calling out like this he entered his head through the gate. Without wasting time the young man hit his sword hard on the head of the monster and sliced it. Another head protruded through the gate. He slashed it too. And yet another. One by one seven heads of the Blind Monster jutted out calling 'This is not my head,' and the young man slashed each of them shouting back, 'This is not my sword,' and slew the monster.

Getting rid of the monster both the young man and the exquisite lady happily married. After having spent one day with his newlywed wife in the castle he planned to go on with his pursuit the next

morning. The wife tried to convince him not to go, but when she failed she said, "Do not go on dear husband. The monster you killed was only a younger one. His two elder brothers are posted further ahead. They are far more dangerous. They will devour you up. Do not go on please!" She further continued, "We were three sisters, and these three brother-monsters have spared only us, while they have eaten up our parents and all our people." The young man said, "I have undertaken this journey to do a service to my father, not to marry a woman. If I am destined to remain alive throughout the adventure, I shall come back to you one day. If I am destined to die, I shall die." Saying this he took to his way, and the wife wept bitterly after him.

The young man walked on, hour after hour, day after day, month after month. One day he reached a town and saw that everything in this town was red. The lands, the sky, the trees all were red. And there were no human beings to be seen. This was also a human-built and a human-less town at the same time. Not only humans, the land was devoid of all living things. No birds, no insects and no green trees were to be seen. It was all red. "The Red Town," the young man named it in his thoughts. He walked on and at a great distance he saw a castle. He went towards it. Upon reaching there he entered through the main gate, which was open. It was a great castle, greater than the one he saw earlier on the white land. The ceilings were so high that when one looked up one might drop one's cap. He went from room to room and could find no human beings or other creatures inside. Until he banged-open the fifteenth room's door and saw a woman sitting inside. The woman was exquisitely pretty---prettier than the lady he had married before. He greeted her and entered. The startled woman responded his greeting and said, "Oh self-destroying man! Wherefore did you come here? Go back soon. When the monster comes back he will devour you as well as me. Go back now. He has eaten up my parents, once rulers, the subjects, the army and everything. He has spared me only to keep me here as his wife. Go back. Soon! When he returns, he will spare neither you nor me." The young man said, "I won't go back. If by destiny, I am to spend the night in this world I cannot spend it in the grave; and if, by destiny, I am to spend the night in the grave I cannot spend it in this world. Let whatever is destined happen to me." He continued, "I am too tired, and badly want to rest for a while. I will be lying there on the bed. You kindly rub my head a little till I sleep. When the monster approaches, wake me up." Resting his head on her lap he went to sleep.

After he had slept for a while, there was roaring thunder outside and stinky smell gripped the castle. The woman felt pity for the life of the young man. "If I do not wake the young man up he will surely devour him, and if I do still he will not spare him. What to do? To wake him or not to wake him?" She thought and wept bitterly. Tears rolling down her cheeks dropped on the face of the young man and he woke up. "What happened?" He asked. "The Blind Monster is approaching," she replied. With a leap the young man got up, took his sword, went outside and hid himself behind the gate. Peeping through the crack in the door he saw the monster carrying and dragging carcasses of wild animals home. It was a terrifying monster. Approaching the gate he called out, "I smell of a human being. I smell of a human being." Repeatedly calling so, he entered his head through the gate. The young man hit him hard on his head with the sword and sliced it. Calling out, "This is not my head" he entered another head, and the young man slashed it too. One by one he protruded nine heads, calling out, "This is not *my* head," and the young man slashed each one, calling out, "This is not *my* sword." Finally the monster lay there, slain.

Getting rid of the monster both the young man and the exquisite lady happily married. He spent that night with his newlywed wife in the castle. The next morning he planned to go on his journey. His wife wept bitterly and said, "Do not go on please! This was only the younger brother. His elder brother lives further ahead. He will eat you up. You should not go. He will not spare you." Her husband said, "I have undertaken this journey to do a service to my father, not to marry a woman. If I am destined to remain alive throughout the adventure, I shall come back to you one day. If I am destined to die, I shall die." Saying this he took to his way, and the wife wept bitterly after him.

He walked on. Days crept into weeks, weeks crept into months, and months crept into years. One day he reached another town. He saw that everything in this town was black. The lands, the trees, the mountains, the sky, all were black. "The Black Town", he thought. Like the other towns, this town too was devoid of human beings as well as living creatures. Like them this too was a human-built and a human-less town at the same time. He walked through the town and saw a solitary castle on top of a mound. He climbed up. It was a large and great castle, larger and greater than both the castles in the Red and White towns. He entered the castle, went door to door, and saw no one inside. Until he came to a door, banged-open it, and saw a woman, an exquisitely pretty woman, sitting inside. She was prettier than the two women he had married earlier in the two castles. He greeted her and entered. The woman responded his greeting and said, "Oh, self-destroying young man! Oh, distinguished human being! Wherefore did you come here? Go back soon. Go back. When the monster comes back, he will devour you as well as me. Go back all the way." When the young man didn't budge, she continued, "He has eaten up my parents, the people, the army and everything on this land; and has spared me only to be his wife, because he thinks I am pretty. My life is like hell with him. You should go now. Soon. Flee. He will eat you up. Go!" The young man said, "If, by destiny, I am to spend the night in this world I cannot spend it in the grave; and if, by destiny, I am to spend the night in the grave I cannot spend it in this world. Let whatever is destined happen to me. I won't go back. I am too tired," he continued, "and badly want to rest for a while. I will be lying there on the bed. You kindly rub my head a little till I fall asleep. When the monster approaches, wake me up." Saying this he instantly went to sleep.

After he had slept for a while, there was roaring thunder outside, and stinky smell gripped the castle. It was the monster's time to return. The woman felt pity for the young man. "If I do not wake the young man up he will surely devour him, and if I do still he will not spare him. What to do? To wake him or not to wake him?" she thought and wept bitterly. Tears rolling down her cheeks dropped on the face of the young man and he woke up. "What happened?" he asked. "The monster is approaching," she replied. He leapt onto his feet, took up his sword, ran to the gate and ambushed behind it.

Peeping through a crack in the door he saw a huge and hideous monster slouching towards the castle. This was far more terrifying than the two he had slain earlier. Approaching the gate he called out, "I smell of a human being. I smell of a human being." Repeating this when he entered his head through the gate the young man hit his sword hard and sliced it. Calling out, "This is not my head" he entered another head, and the young man slashed it too. One by one he protruded a score of heads, calling out, "This is not *my* head," and the young man slashed each one, calling out, "This is not *my* sword." At last the monster laid there, a hideous lump.

Got rid of the monster both the young man and the exquisite lady happily married. After he spent the night with her in the castle, he said to his newlywed wife, "I am going further ahead with my journey. I have to go to the Heaven Fairy's court." The wife replied, "You should not go on. The Monster-crocodile is watching over the path further ahead. This is not possible for you to get to the Heaven Fairy's court. The Monster-crocodile will eat you up. He is very dangerous." The young man replied, "I have set out on this adventure to do a service to my father, not to marry a woman, or to serve one. Let me try whatever it costs. If, by destiny, I am to spend the night in this world I cannot spend it in the grave; and if, by destiny, I am to spend the night in the grave I cannot spend it in this world. Let whatever is destined happen to me." Saying this he took to his way, with his newlywed wife weeping bitterly after her husband, bound towards an unknown destination.

The young man kept walking. Days crept into weeks, weeks crept into months, and months crept into years.

One day he turned up to a place. Here, like the other lands he had visited, he could see no living creatures. He moved on, and reached a place where he saw that a giant crocodile was about to attack the chicks of a plumed Simorgh, Bird of Divinity, in their nest on a huge tree-branch.

He wasted no time, ran to the tree and hit hard the crocodile with his sword from behind. He killed it, and, lo, its large carcass fell from the tree with a thundering sound, and rolled long way down into the deep gorge.

Then the young man took a pair of plumes from the nest of the Simorgh and went on, till he reached the top of a mound. The chicks of the Simorgh never kept their eyes off their saviour. Meanwhile their mother returned to the nest. No sooner did she settle in the nest than the chicks asked her, "Dear mother! Have your chicks ever survived before?" The mother took a sigh and said, "Oh, dear chicks! They have never survived. Never. Nor are you going to survive! It is a matter of just a few days when you will also be devoured by..." "Devoured by whom?" the chicks interrupted their mother and yelled, "Look! Down there!" The mother looked down into the gorge. Lo and behold! There lay the carcass of the crocodile, large and long. "Who did slay him?" The excited mother asked. "A good young man suddenly turned up here, and slew him." They yelled back. "Where did he go then?" The mother cried out. "He is resting up there. Look!" They pointed at the top of the mound, opposite the nest.

The Simorgh thought to do something for the good man. She quickly flew towards him, perched on the mound beside him and said, "Oh, good gentleman! You have done me a huge service. You have saved my chicks. You have saved my generation. No service can be greater than this. Now I offer my service to you, whatever it costs. What would you want me to do for you? You good human being!"

The young man politely turned down her offer. But when she insisted, he told her that he was going to the court of the Heaven Fairy to get the Laughing Falcon. "Would you be of any help in this? And can you give me a hint or trace of that place?" He asked.

"I'll fly you there," said the Simorgh, "And will also tell you all the secrets about it. But for that you will have to ride me; and while flying when I complete a wide gyre you will feed me with a large piece of

meat. And when I complete another gyre you will give me water to drink. Repeat this with every gyre and I'll land you closer to the desired place."

The young man quickly searched for carcasses and water; he stocked them; he carried them with him. Lo! He was riding the Simorgh now.

When she completed one gyre and soared high he fed her with meat, when she did another he gave her water. He repeated this as demanded, till at the turn of the last gyre he was left with no meat. Upon demanding meat this time, the puzzled young man, pressingly, ripped the flesh off his thigh and fed her with it. With this the Simorgh got him up to that place and landed him. "The last bite of meat that you gave me was too sour and salty. What was that?" She asked. "It was my own flesh," replied the young man, "Torn from my thigh." Quickly she vomited it out and pasted right on the place where it belonged.

Then she told him that at a certain place ahead watches the bloodsucking witch, posted by Heaven Fairy. This witch was too dangerous; she would sear every living thing in fire and devour them. "You would recognize her by these signs," she said, "A large breast is hanging at her back and another at her front. Without making her alert you will have to approach her from behind and suck her milk. If you are not able to do this, it means you will have no life after that. And if you are able to do this, she can no longer harm you. Now go ahead. I shall return to fly you down." Saying this, the Simorgh flew away.

The young man cautiously walked on and on, till he reached the place where was the lookout of the witch. Here she was, sitting beside a bonfire, holding the whole carcass of a donkey and searing it! With one large and clumsy breast hanging at the back and the other in her front; hollering from the mouth; farting from below; she was sitting there devouring one half of the donkey-meat while the other half was still raw.

The young man paced on with cautious strides. He approached her from behind, got hold of her breast, suckled the milk and yelled, "Mother! Mother! I have sucked your milk." She turned around, she looked at the young man, she screamed at him. "If you hadn't sucked my milk and called me mother I would have devoured you alive, along with this meat! Now tell me why you are here?" The young man told her that he was going to the court of Heaven Fairy to get the Laughing Falcon. "Now that you have sucked my milk, called me mother, and become my son, I shall help you." She said. "Otherwise I would have devoured you alive like I have done many others. Now pay attention. You will do what I tell you to do. Listen carefully! You will walk further on, till you reach the Heaven Fairy's court. And when you have reached there you will need to do a few things. You will walk the untrodden paths, not the trodden ones. You will turn the water into the dry waterways, and block the running streams. You will open the closed doors, and close the open ones. When you enter the garden you will eat the bitter apricots, not the sweet ones. When you get to the horse barns there will be bones in front of horses, and chaff in front of dogs at kennels. You will throw the bones to the dogs, and lay the chaff for the horses. When you enter the front room you will find the Holy Scripture down on the floor, and the golden spinning wheel on the shelf. You will have to place the Holy Scripture on the shelf, and bring the golden spinning wheel down on the flood. After you have done this, the Laughing Falcon will fly in and settle on your arm!"

Without wasting time the young man paced on, till he arrived at the court of Heaven Fairy. At last!

As instructed by the witch, he walked the untrodden paths, and didn't walk the trodden ones. Upon entering the garden he ate the bitter apricots, and didn't eat the sweet ones. He opened the closed doors, and closed the open ones. He turned water into the dry waterways and blocked the running streams. He threw the bones to the dogs and laid the chaff for the horses. Then he entered the front room, and picked up the Holy Scripture from the floor and placed it on the shelf. He brought the golden spinning wheel down to the floor. And Lo! The Laughing Falcon flew in. It perched on his arm, and laughed at him.

The Heaven Fairy got up from sleep meanwhile, and ordered the trodden paths not to allow the young man tread them. The trodden paths responded, "Why do we not allow him after all? You have walked over us excessively and trodden us into dust, while the good young man spared us. We won't stop him anyway." They disobeyed the Heaven Fairy.

She shouted at the untrodden paths, "Oh, my untrodden paths! Do not let the young man tread you!" "You have never walked on us", they shouted back, "always preferring the other paths. And the good young man chose to tread us. Wherefore should we stop him?" They also disobeyed her. She shouted at the bitter-apricot tree to fall upon the young man and stop him. It shouted back, "Wherefore should I fall upon him? You never ate my fruit, you hated me. And the good young man chose to eat my fruit. Wherefore should I fall upon him now?" She shouted at sweet-apricot tree, "Oh, my sweet tree! Fall upon the young man and stop him." "You have ripped me off my fruits," the tree yelled back, "sparing not a single stone for my progeny. And the good young man has spared my fruits. Wherefore should I fall upon him?" She shouted at the horses to stop him. They shouted back, "You have been feeding us with bones instead of straw and chaff. And the good young man threw away the bones and fed us with chaff. Wherefore should we stop him?" She shouted at the dogs to stop him. They yelled back, "You have been feeding us with chaff and straw. And the young man threw them away and fed us full with bones. Wherefore should we stop him?" She shouted at the Holy Scripture, "Oh, Holy Book! Help! Stop the thief!" "I am God's Word," it yelled back, "and you had put me down on the floor and disrespected me; whereas the good young man placed me on the shelf and gave me respect. Wherefore should I help you and stop him?" "Oh, my golden spinning wheel! Stop the robber!" She shouted at the spinning wheel. "Everything has its own place," it yelled back, "so have I. You have been placing me on the shelf, while my right place is down on the floor. And the good young man placed me on my right place. Wherefore should I stop him?"

Everything at her disposal disobeyed the Heaven Fairy. And the young man safely escaped, with the Laughing Falcon on his arm.

On his way back he came to his witch-mother. She blessed him and kissed him farewell. He ran down to the place when the Simorgh had landed him. The Simorgh instantly reached there and got him all the way down to the mound where she had carried him earlier. The young man, then, ran to the third Blind Monster's palace, to find his wife desperately awaiting his return. He took her with him along with her belongings.

With the Laughing Falcon on his arm the young man scurried down till he reached the second Blind Monster's palace, to find his second wife desperately awaiting his return. He also took her with him along with her belongings.

He paced further on and reached the first Blind Monster's palace, to find his wife desperately waiting for him. He took her, too, with him along with her belongings.

They kept walking together, for days and weeks and months, till on the way they reached the old man's house, who watched the path and whose daughter the young man had married at the earliest of his adventure. Here he found his first wife desperately awaiting his return. Sharing the treasure and riches with her he took her with him, along with her belongings. The old man, his father-in-law, gifted him a dog. The young man moved on, with the Laughing Falcon on his arm, four wives walking beside and the dog escorting them all. They paced on and on till they came to the place where the two paths were branching off, and where there was the inscription on the tree that read ***"He who treads this path shall never return, and he who treads that path shall."*** And his half-brothers had forced him to go by the 'Path of No Return'.

"What might have occurred to my brothers? They would have returned or not?" He thought for a while, and decided to find them out. He wanted to join them now. He chose the 'Path of Return' this time, and went looking for his brothers.

After walking a long distance he found his brothers in desperate conditions. They had been kept as slaves and labours by the landlords of this land. They were being forced to do hard tasks like grinding mills, grazing cattle, spreading manure on the land, and tilling the soil. The young man got them all free from slavery. He gave them food, provided them new clothes to put on. On the way he told them to rest for a while. They were tired of hard labour, soon they went to sleep.

When they woke up, they woke up not without evil plans in their minds. "Let us kill this, our half-brother!" They whispered to each other, "Otherwise our father will not allow us home." One of them said, "We were featherbedded sons of our father, whereas he disliked this, our half-brother, as well as his mother. Now with all this to his credit how can we face our loving father? It is a matter of embarrassment for us, his dear sons. We cannot go home without slaying him." The other brother suggested, "Let us not kill him. Let us take his eyes out, and render him blind. He will live begging in this land, and won't ever be able to come home."

They also tempted his wives and persuaded them into their favour. While the young man was sleeping they ripped him off his eyes. And, lo, they rendered him blind.

The half-brothers took his wives, his treasure and the Laughing Falcon, and started off towards the palace of their father. The good young man remained in the dark land, with only the dog to accompany him. It would squeal, sniff around him. It would run to a short distance, and come back to him. And it would curl up beside him.

One good moment, two birds flew in and settled on the tree above them. "How unfortunate this young man is!" said one of the birds, "First his father didn't duly love him and his mother, denying them the pleasure and luxury of his royal palace. Then after when he came out to serve his father and hardly survived the deadly monsters and did all the difficult tasks to get the Laughing Falcon to his father, and got his cruel brothers freed from slavery; his cruel brothers, instead of being grateful to him, ripped him off his eyes and left him here. Oh, how most unfortunate this man is!" The other bird said, "His story is not over yet. Getting back his eyesight is not impossible for him. Only if someone takes him to the spring down there, gets him wash his face and water his eyes, and helps him offer a two-set (*Ruka'at*) prayer; he soon will get his eyes back. It is never impossible. There have happened more miraculous turnarounds."

Hearing this conversation the dog rushed to the young man, got him hold his tale and led him down to the spring. Sitting by the headspring the young man washed his hands and face, watered his eyes, and offered a two-set of prayer. And, lo and behold, he instantly got his eyes back! He got up, he looked around, he patted his dog, he took to his way. And the good dog followed him.

He walked for days and nights till he reached the lands of his father, the king. On his way to the palace he heard firings, cheers and music. He knew it. A grand celebration was going on in the palace, while in the mud house the unfortunate mother was mourning the death of her only son.

The young man secretly rushed to his mud house and got in. The loving arms of the mother were wide open, and in a moment the young man was wrapped into them. The tears of passionate joy soon replaced those of heartbreaking grief in the eyes of the mother. "Oh, dear son!" said the wailing mother, "Hadh't I told you not to go? Hadh't I told you that you would not be able to get the Laughing Falcon? Oh, dear son! And how could you get it, as you have lived a confined life in this mud house, while your brothers are well brought up, they know many things and many skills. They are well cultured and widely travelled. And you lack everything they have in abundance!" "Dear mother..." his voice got stuck at his throat, "I got sick. And couldn't get what I had gone after." "They are also my brothers," the overwhelmed son further continued, "What matters if I have not been able to get the Laughing Falcon. They have, at least, got my father's desire fulfilled. They are also my brothers. I am satisfied that I had gone away to do my father a service, and that I was destined not to be successful. Mother! Let us not complain!"

The festivities went on in the palace, and why would anyone ask about the unfortunate young man! His half-brothers had hit the jackpot, and their joy knew no bounds. Party, cheers, laughter, music and dance were what everyone in the palace was a part of.

Meanwhile, the Heaven Fairy, lo and behold, flew into the palace. She entered the court; she got to the throne and shouted "Who has brought my Laughing Falcon down here? Tell me! Who dared to do that?" There was fear and silence in the court. One of the three brothers got up and walked slowly up to the throne where the Heaven Fairy was standing. He was thin-built and arrogant. Without proper greetings and respect he stood by the throne. "Who has brought my Laughing Falcon down here?" shouted the Heaven Fairy at him. "I have brought it down," said the arrogant son. "How did you bring it down? And

what way did you tread?" She shouted again. "I brought it down. That is it," he responded. "Is that it?" thundered the Heaven Fairy and delivered a fierce slap on his face. The thunderous blow burnt his face, and, lo, a part of the town outside the palace burnt too. The word of his son's burnt face and burnt town reached the king in his pleasure dome. He feared a bit. The Heaven Fairy, meanwhile, shouted again. "Who has brought my Laughing Falcon down here?"

The other son got up, walked to the throne and stood there without proper greetings and respect. "Who has brought my Laughing Falcon down here?" shouted the Heaven Fairy at him. "I have brought it down," said the son boastfully. "How did you bring it down? And what way did you tread?" she shouted more loudly at him. "I brought it down. That is it," he responded. "Is that it?" thundered the Heaven Fairy at him and delivered a fierce slap on his face. The thunderous blow burnt his face, and, lo, a part of the town outside the palace burnt too. The word of his second son's burnt face and burnt town reached the king in his pleasure dome. "Who has brought my Laughing Falcon down here?" shouted the Fairy yet again. The third son walked to the throne and stood there without proper greetings and respect. "Who has brought my Laughing Falcon down here?" shouted the Heaven Fairy at him. "I have brought it down," said the son boastfully. "How did you bring it down? And what way did you tread?" she shouted more loudly at him. "I brought it down. That is it," he responded. "Is that it?" thundered the Heaven Fairy at him and delivered a fierce slap on his face. The thunderous blow burnt his face, and, lo, a part of the town outside the palace burnt too. The word of his third son's burnt face and burnt town reached the king in his pleasure dome.

The Heaven Fairy shouted again, "Who has brought my Laughing Falcon down here?" The young man in the mud house heard the piercing call, and rushed to the court. "The Fairy slapped all my brave sons, and down they lie. Now how can this indolent boy stand her blow! Oh, my kingship is gone." thought the king to himself.

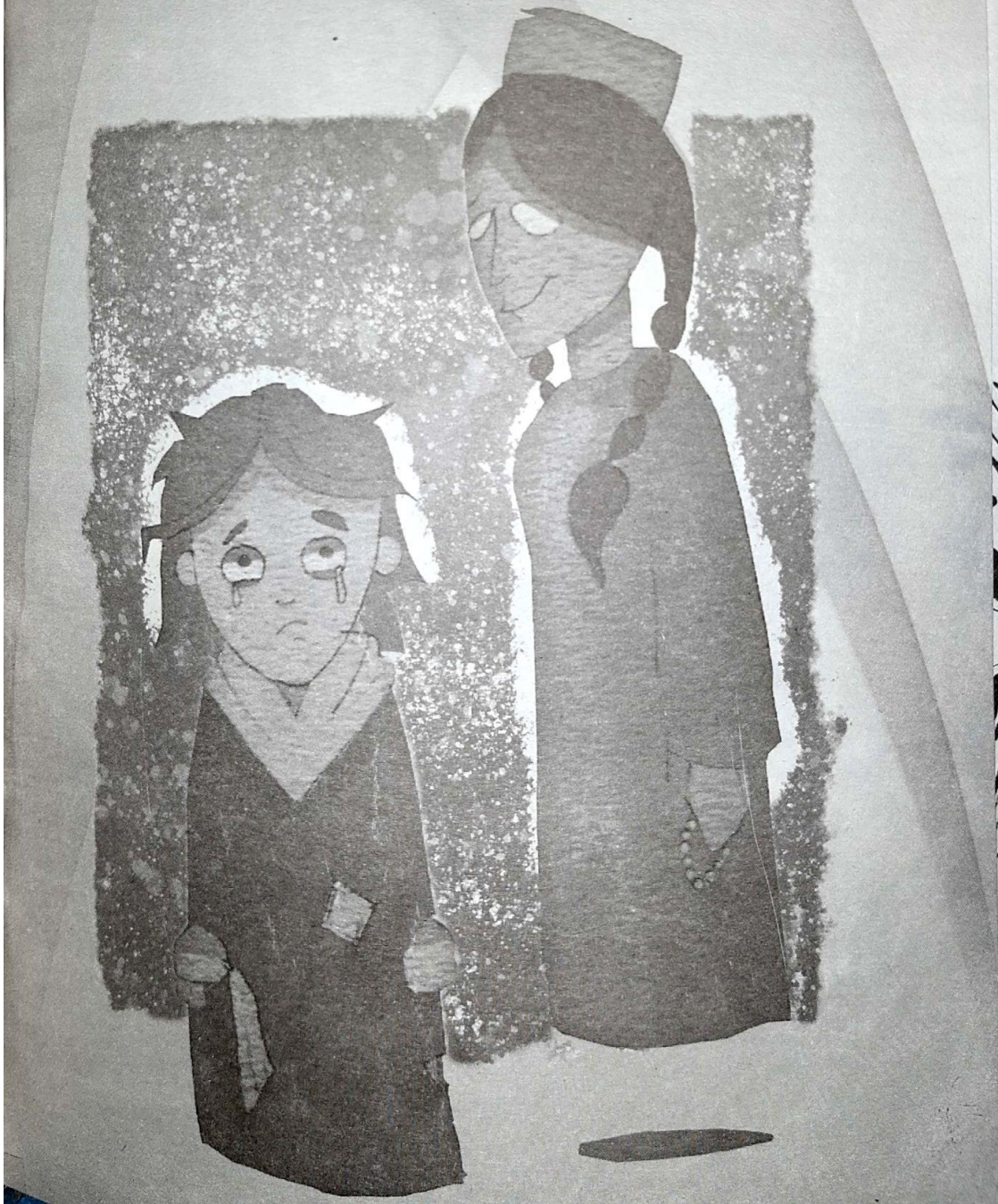
The young man respectfully got to the throne, and paid polite greetings to the Heaven Fairy. "O young man! Who has brought my Laughing Falcon down here?" she enquired. The young man politely said, "I have brought it down, Madam!" "How did you bring it? And what way did you tread?" she enquired again. "I brought it this way," said the young man "On my journey to get it, first I spent a night at the old man's house who watched for you on the way. And I married his daughter. Then after walking for days and months I reached a strange town. There I confronted the White Monster, who watched for you. I killed him and married his wife. Then after walking for more days and more months I reached another strange town. There I confronted the Red Monster, who watched for you. I killed him and married his wife. Then after walking for days and months I reached a strange town. There I confronted the Black Monster, who watched for you. I killed him and married his wife. Then I moved on till I got to a place where I killed the Dragon, who watched for you. Then further moving on I suckled the milk of the Witch, who watched for you, and called her mother. Afterwards upon getting to your palace I treaded on your untrodden paths and did not tread on the trodden ones. I turned water into the dry waterways and blocked the running streams. I opened the closed doors and closed the opened ones. I threw the bones to the dogs and laid the chaff for the horses. I placed the Holy Scripture on the shelf, and brought the golden spinning wheel down to the floor. After I had done all this, the Laughing Falcon flew in and perched on my arm. And I brought it down with me."

The Heaven Fairy stepped down from the throne, patted the young man on the shoulder and said, "Well done! You brave young man!"

The word of the disliked son's bringing the Laughing Falcon was communicated to the king. He got badly embarrassed now, as he had realized the dirty game of his three featherbedded sons. Without wasting time he rushed to the mud house. His feelings for his neglected wife and son had undergone a change. He loved them now. He really did. He took her to his palace, made her his queen, and appointed his formerly beloved wife---the mother of the three sons---a maidservant for her. Next, he appointed the young man as the crown prince of his throne, and appointed the three sons as his servants.

The young man and his loving mother lived happily ever after.

The Stepmother's Story



The Stepmother's Story

(Narrator: Muhammad Nasikh Uddin, Werkup Torkhow)

Once upon a time there was a wealthy man, who had two wives. He had many children from the second wife but from the first one only a single daughter. He loved his first wife more than the second one, which made the second wife jealous of her. She held grudges against her husband's first wife and thought he only cared about her and her daughter, and the latter's children were not given due care and attention.

One day she called her step-daughter and said to her, "Today when your mother goes to wash her hair, you too go with her and help her wash her hair, but make sure the water is boiling hot. It will help grow her hair quickly. And don't let her know that I have told you so." The girl was too young to understand her trick.

Thus when the elder wife was going to wash her hair, the daughter offered her help. The mother said she would do it herself, but upon her insistence she agreed. She brought boiling-hot water with her and put it on her mother's head. The water was so hot that she died on the spot.

After her death, the step-mother showed her real nature. She made the young unlucky girl suffer like hell. She gave all good things---delicious food, fine and expensive clothes and soft beds to her own children and the step-daughter was fed on burnt and leftover food. She was given old and worn-out dress to wear. She was also made to work hard all day and was not allowed to rest. She spent her days serving her step-mother and her children.

One day there was some function in the neighbour's house and the whole family was invited. The stepmother got ready for the function but did not let her go. Instead she gave her some millet mixed with sorghum, and asked her to separate them till her return. When she left, the young girl felt very sad and started crying over her step-mother's behaviour. She wished her mother were alive she would never have to face such a situation. Suddenly her mother's ghost appeared and said, "My dear child, stop crying. I will help you." But she was very sad. She said, "But how will you help me? You are not even alive." She said, "Go and check in the house, you will find a stone behind the cupboard. Rub it and a man will appear. He will help you with whatever you want."

She went and found the stone exactly where her mother's ghost had told her. When she rubbed it, a man appeared before her and said, "What's the matter? Why did you call me?" She said, "Please help me, I am very sad." "What is it that is making you so sad?" continued the man. Pointing towards the grains to be separated she said, "My step- mother has gone to attend a function and she has given me this to separate. But how will I do it. This is not possible." The man waved his magic wand and a cock appeared. He gave it to her and said it would do what she could not do i.e., separate the sorghum grains form from the millet. Then he changed her old clothes into beautiful dress with the help of his magic wand, gave her gold sandals to wear and asked her to go to the function so that she might forget her grief for some time.

She looked very beautiful in that dress. She went to the function, but kept herself concealed from her step-mother. She was watching her from behind the door when she saw her picking rice from the floor. A woman went to her and said, "Why are you picking rice from the floor when there is so much rice left in the kitchen? Go and take it from the kitchen if you want to eat."

She said, "No I have had enough. I only want it for an orphan girl living in my home. She does not deserve something better than this." Saying this she picked that same rice and left the house. The girl got very upset upon hearing this. She, however, controlled herself and left in a hurry after her. She thought she must reach home before her step-mother, otherwise she would be seriously reprimanded if found away from home. She took an alternative short route leading to her home, but there was a stream on that way. In her attempt to jump over the stream, she dropped one of her sandals into the water. She could not go after it because she was getting late. Because of the fear of her step-mother she let it flow with the water and got home.

She went into the house and after changing the beautiful suit dressed herself in her old clothes. Her step-mother reached home shortly after her. As soon as she got home she asked her about the task given to her whether it was finished or not. She said, "Yes, I have done it." Then she gave her the rice that she had brought from the function, but the girl refused to eat saying she was not hungry.

The stream where she had dropped her sandal passed through the king's palace. The king found that sandal and made an announcement in the kingdom that the girl whose foot fit into that sandal would be married to his son. The king's servants took the sandal and went to all houses in the kingdom. They also went to the rich man's home to find the lady whose feet would fit into the sandal. When the step-mother came to know about this, she hid the girl behind the curtain and presented her own daughters to check the shoe. They tried their best to push their feet hard into the shoe but it couldn't fit their feet. While they were trying their luck, one of the servants saw something protruding out of the curtain. He asked the lady, "What is there behind the curtain?" She said, "It is a hen". "But it is too large in size," continued the man in surprise. She changed her statement and said, "No, actually it is a sheep." Confused and dissatisfied by her self-contradictory statements, he himself went and checked behind the curtain. To his surprise he found a beautiful girl hiding behind it in fear. He took her out and tried the sandal in her feet. To their amazement it fit her perfectly. They took her with them to the king's palace and there she was married to the prince and thus she became princess of the palace.

However, she could not forget whatever her step-mother had done to her and her mother. One day she came to her house and asked her step-sister to do the same thing which her step-mother had made her do. She said, "Today when your mother goes to wash her hair, you too go with her and wash her hair with boiling hot water." This way she wanted to avenge her mother's death.

Accordingly when the step-mother was going to wash her hair, her daughter also insisted to go with her, and put boiling-hot water on her head. As a result she also died. Thus the girl took her revenge by killing her step-mother and repeating those same cruelties on her step-sisters which she had to face because of her step-mother.

She spent the rest of her life happily ever after, with the prince in his palace.

Farid Ahmad Raza

Farid Ahmad Raza is the Chief Executive of Mother-tongue Initiatives for Education and Research (MIER), an organization working for language promotion and culture documentation in Chitral District. He is a researcher, a writer and Editor-in-chief of Khovar Nama, a literary journal in Khovar Language. He holds diplomas in language and culture documentation, and has helped the language communities of northern Pakistan in documenting their mother tongues. He has also worked with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Textbook Board and compiled Khovar Primer (Alif bey). He is a linguist and language activist based in Chitral. He has authored and compiled quite a few books.

Zahoor ul Haq Danish

Zahoor ul Haq Danish is lecturer in English at University of Chitral. He has also remained lecturer as well as in-charge of the Department of English Language & Literature at SBB University Chitral Campus. He has worked with the Directorate of Curriculum & Teachers Education Govt of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in developing Khovar Curriculum and Teachers' Training Manuals. Being a language and culture activist, he volunteers to work with Mother-tongue Initiatives for Education & Research (MIER) Chitral as editor, researcher and translator, and with Anjuman Taraqqi Khovar as general secretary of the central body. He takes keen interest in the study of folk literature, and has taken up the challenging task of bilingual preservation of Khovar folk literature.